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National Identity and Experiences of Nationalism in Germany's 'Lost Territories'
Danzig/Gdask and Kattowitz/Katowice, 1919-1930

National Identity and Experiences of Nationalism in Germany's 'Lost Territories': Danzig/Gdańsk and Kattowitz/Katowice, 1919-1930

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of nationalism and national identity in Danzig/Gdańsk and Kattowitz/Katowice, two German-speaking cities detached from the German Empire as part of the post-First World War peace settlement. Danzig became an internationalised quasi-independent 'Free City' guaranteed by the League of Nations to provide the newly reconstituted Polish Second Republic access to the sea. In contrast, Kattowitz and its surrounding industrial heartland were incorporated into Poland, as much for economic reasons as national self-determination.

This thesis explores the role national identity played in these two cities and how their citizens negotiated the change in status imposed from above. In Danzig the 'Free City compromise' was viewed as illegitimate but in the absence of treaty revision, the city created a civic identity built on a German nationalist reading of its Hanseatic past. Not even a new '*Verständigungspolitik*' ('policy of understanding') after 1927 could genuinely reset its relationship with Poland. The city of Kattowitz, on the other hand, was transformed as it became a new Polish administrative centre. However, despite the region's special status, a stalemate emerged between the Polish authorities and this 'new' German minority.

In focussing on these two case studies, this thesis builds on recent scholarship which explores the effects of nationalism in contested borderland spaces, incorporating, in particular, the framework of 'national indifference'. This thesis contributes to the historiographical debate on the role of nationalism in East Central Europe, contending that the negotiation of new 'detached' national identities in both cities was more complex and contingent than just 'inevitable' German irredentism. Studies on these German communities during the early interwar period have often focussed on them as the prelude to expulsion after 1945 but this thesis instead relates their experience to wider transnational processes unleashed by the imperial collapse of 1918.

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I would like to thank my supervisors Mark Allinson and Debbie Pinfold for their generous guidance, patience and support throughout the project. They were a reassuring presence during an uncertain time and helped me adapt my project to accommodate the challenges of 2020. Damien McManus, the subject librarian for German at Bristol, also assisted in this and was always willing to help me track down ebooks while physical libraries were closed. I would also like to thank my friends for helping me through this year, in particular Alexia Kirov for the academic *Kameradschaft*. Finally, I would like to thank my parents who helped instil in me the curiosity of which this thesis is a product.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ..... DATE: 15.12.2020

Contents

List of maps, figures and tables

A note on language

One of the challenges of writing about contested, multicultural spaces is that this contestation also extends to language. Where possible I have used accepted English forms but where there are two variants such as the two case studies, Kattowitz/Katowice and Danzig/Gdańsk, I initially use both and then use the German form, although as I discuss in the text particularly with regard to Kattowitz, this does not necessarily denote German hegemony within the city.

List of abbreviations

BnF – French National Library

DNVP – German National People's Party

DP – German Party (Upper Silesia)

DSD – German Social Democratic Party (Upper Silesia)

DSP – German Social Party

DVS – Deutsche Volksstimme

DZ – Danziger Zeitung

KPD – Communist Party

KVP – Catholic People's Party (Upper Silesia)

KZ – Kattowitzer Zeitung

NSDAP – Nazi Party

OGZ – Oberschlesische Grenz-Zeitung

OK – Oberschlesische Kurier

OW – Oberschlesische Wanderer

PCIJ – Permanent Court of International Justice

PPS – Polish Socialist Party

SPD – Social Democratic Party

USPD – Independent Social Democratic Party

VW – Volkswille

ZEFYS – Newspaper information system, Staatsbibliothek Berlin

Chapter 1: Introduction

The First World War was a defining moment for nationalism in East Central Europe. Before the war the culturally heterogeneous territories of the region had been split between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires and since 1871 the German Reich, as much a nationalising state as an empire. These had to varying degrees of success sought to subdue, contain and co-opt rival nationalisms but their defeat and dissolution enabled the construction of explicit nation-states from the imperial wreckage. In this historical moment, Wilsonian rhetoric of national self-determination manifested in the primacy of the nation-state as *the* constitutive unit in the new post-war order created at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

This embedding of nationalism into the new nation-states of East Central Europe also created national minorities. The populations of the territories over which borders were delineated were as heterogeneous as ever and, as Pieter Judson has argued, the new states often resembled 'mini-empires' themselves.[1] The creation of the new 'minorities question' was a by-product of this process. Self-determination was not a universally applied principle and had to conform to Allied plans for a new post-war order. After these new states were established and their borders demarcated, people who had lived their entire lives in one Empire found themselves citizens of a 'foreign' state. Overnight many had become a diaspora without having moved as borders shifted and populations were detached from their 'kin-state'. Shifting borders was not a new phenomenon, least of all in East Central Europe, but it was imbued with new meaning when it was done according to *explicitly* nationalist principles. Imperial collapse cast a long shadow and this thesis is concerned with how those on the ground negotiated their shifting national identities, far from the centres of power where decisions about them were being made

To explore this negotiation this thesis focuses on the two cities of Danzig/Gdańsk and Kattowitz/Katowice. Both were majority German-speaking in 1918 but were detached from the German Reich as part of the peace settlement, forming part of what German revanchists labelled the 'lost territories'. Danzig was a historic port on the Baltic Sea and at the mouth of

[1] Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, UP, 2018), p. 448.

the Vistula river. Before its incorporation into the Kingdom of Prussia in 1793, it had served as *the* port of the Polish lands linked by the Vistula to Warsaw and Krakow; its German-speaking élite had previously pledged their allegiance to the Polish king quite willingly. In contrast, Kattowitz in Upper Silesia had been established for barely fifty years when war broke out in 1914, but it too owed its existence to industry, namely mining and steel production. It was at the heart of the Upper Silesian industrial district, a sprawling agglomeration of heavy industry known as the 'second Ruhr' since output which had transformed Eastern Upper Silesia over the latter half of the nineteenth century.

No borders were uncontested in the post-war period, but the reconstitution of a Polish state was a particular challenge. The histories of German and Polish speakers had long been entangled in East Central Europe. Medieval migrations and the advances of the Teutonic knights had left the eastern border of cultural conceptions of 'Germany' somewhat ambiguous. Once Poland had disappeared from the map entirely after 1795, the process of neatly disentangling the two nations would be fraught and contested. The spread of nationalism, with its emphasis on inviolable sovereign borders, meant that territorial adjustments would be contested by 'normal' people like never before. Danzig was made a *sui generis* 'Free City', a quasi-independent polity guaranteed by the new League of Nations. Its name referred both to its brief experience as a Napoleonic Free City and its premodern status as a member of the Hanseatic League. Poland was promised 'free and secure access to the sea' to ensure its viability in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points speech and Danzig was the only plausible candidate.

Another, different compromise was found for Upper Silesia which experienced nationalist violence in the period 1919-1922. After the results of the 1921 plebiscite were contested, the territory was partitioned: Germany received 75% of its territory but Poland received 95% of its industrial capacity. Kattowitz was henceforth within Poland despite registering a vote of 85% for Germany. Upper Silesia as a whole would be subject to the 1922 German-Polish Geneva Convention which went further than the minorities treaties which had been forced on Poland and the other new states in guaranteeing minority rights and ameliorating their new

national status. It would, however, prove difficult to overcome the 'self-determination deficit' as felt by Kattowitzers themselves.

There is some difficulty in writing the history of the German speakers of Danzig and Kattowitz as their histories came to a firm end in 1945 (although their expellee history lived on in the Federal Republic, and to a lesser extent the German Democratic Republic).[2] With expulsion as the effective end of these communities, it is easy to read it as their *telos* and therefore anachronistically to read inevitability into the 1920s. This thesis has sought to avoid this trap and instead to approach the decade, in the words of Zara Steiner, 'as a decade that followed an earlier world war' rather than 'a precursor of the war that followed'.[3] Irredentism did not define the experience of German Danzigers and Kattowitzers nor was it the only way through which their detachment from the Reich was negotiated.

As this thesis is focussed on the study of nationalism and national identity, some brief conceptual framing is important. The nation as the 'imagined community', as theorised by Benedict Anderson,[4] remains a dominant framework for conceptualising nationalism as a historical and sociological phenomenon and for good reason: in grounding the nation as the product of a collective process of imagining, Anderson provides an explanation for why the artificial construct of the nation is able to wield such affective power. This is not to say that that nations are, or came into being from, 'figments of the imagination':[5] the emphasis on *imagined* communities stresses the constructed nature of nations and national identities. They are not infinitely historical and rooted in particular traits or 'ancient hatreds', as essentialised, ethnicist thinking, now largely discredited, suggests.[6] The role of the imaginary is useful

[2] For more on the expellees and their integration into the Federal Republic, see: Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013).
[3] Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919-1933* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. v.
[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006).
[5] John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2020), p. 21.
[6] This 'primordialist' thinking emphasises nationalism as an inevitable teleological and often racialised process. For the most infamous example, which emerged out of the breakdown of the

beyond an explanation of the mere spread of nationalism, however. Like other identities, national identities are not fixed but are the result of a process of negotiation. It is this process in particular which concerns us here.

Over the past twenty years regional social histories have transformed the historical study of nationalism in East Central Europe, both before and after 1918.[7] These have sought to resituate the study away from the nation-state as *the* constitutive unit of investigation and explore nationalism's effects on a local level, emphasising lived experience and how national identity was negotiated through it. The recent reappraisal of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its successor states, a persuasive rebuttal of the old 'prison of nations' paradigm, particularly by Tara Zahra and Pieter Judson,[8] has become a locus for methodological innovation in nationalism studies, countering nationalist histories particularly through their development of the framework of 'national indifference'.[9] This has challenged prevailing ideas of the development of nationalism, particularly the Anderson-Gellner thesis of 'nationalism as modernity/industrialisation',[10] by considering those whose experience of nationalisation was either incomplete or more transactional in nature. This phenomenon is most associated with borderlands between nations but more broadly, national indifference reveals the normative nature of nationalism as a process. It thus helps challenge the idea that the nationalisation process in East Central Europe was complete by 1919 and provocatively questions whether this process is ever one-way. This thesis is not framed entirely around national indifference

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former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, see: Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

[7] This have included: James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-*1965 (Cambridge: CUP, 2017); Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalisms: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848–1918* (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2007); Gregor Thum, *Uprooted. How Breslau became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions* trans. by Tom Lampert and Allison Brown (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011); Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005); Mark Cornwall, *The Devil's Wall: The Nationalist Youth Mission of Heinz Rutha* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012).

[8] Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2008); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, UP, 2007); Judson, *The Habsburg Empire.*

[9] Tara Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', *Slavic Review*, 69.1 (2010), pp. 93-119.

[10] Anderson; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

and the nationally indifferent, although in the case of Kattowitz they are certainly present. Rather, it considers national indifference as an important methodological tool, particularly in how it breaks down the nationalist dichotomy of German and Pole, categories which were not necessarily so fixed in these contested spaces.

While this thesis is primarily focussed on how this national detachment was negotiated on the ground, this detachment is intrinsically tied to broader questions arising from the imperial collapse and the attempt to build a new international order to replace it: to begin to understand where these two cities were situated, it is necessary to account for these wider processes and how they are refracted through the lens of the local. The centenary of the First World War, for example, has been a productive moment in reconsidering our understanding of the conflict and its aftermath. Particularly relevant to this thesis has been the work on how for many populations, particularly those in East Central Europe, war did not end in November 1918.[11] Work on the establishment of the new post-war order has also shown that despite their size, these small contested regions often shaped wider geopolitics.[12]

Due to the impossibility of conventional archival research at the time of writing, this thesis relies upon digitised newspapers, books and pamphlets as the basis of its primary material. While this has necessarily changed the scope of the thesis, emphasising the role of newspapers has equally created its own opportunities. Newspapers were the prototypical form of mass media and as Bernhard Fulda has argued, 'for most Germans in the 1920s, newspapers constituted the only available window on politics'.[13] This is particularly key in these nationally contested spaces as while many German speakers were members of nationalist organisations, many more experienced nationalist politics as mediated by newspapers. Indeed, newspapers often represented *the* intersection between the nation and everyday life.

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[11] Robert Gewarth, *The Vanquished*: *Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917-1923* (London: Penguin, 2017); Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918-1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018).

[12] Leonard V. Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018); Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of the Global Order* (London: Penguin, 2015); Marcus M. Payk and Roberta Pergher (eds.), *Beyond Versailles: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Polities after the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2019).

[13] Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), p. 6.

In this period German-language newspapers were also often associated with a political party, a hangover from Wilhelmine mass politics. Some papers were controlled by a party like the Social Democratic *Danziger Volksstimme,* while others had more indirect links, like the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*'s later support for the Deutsche Partei and the Volksbund. As such, this thesis considers how newspapers not only reflect public opinion but also seek to *shape it*. While they could act as straightforward nationalist organs, particularly around elections, they were often more nuanced than that and this thesis reflects their role in how German speakers mediated their new status and detachment from the Reich.

While this thesis is conceived as a comparative study overall, Chapter 2 focuses on Danzig. First, it explores the process through which the Free City came into being and the debates on the ground in Danzig. It then investigates the role of the past and national symbols in the construction of a collective 'Danzig identity' as a negotiation of its new national status. The chapter's final section involves the political debates of the late 1920s in Danzig over '*Verständigungspolitik*' (a 'policy of understanding') towards Poland and whether the policy represented a watershed moment for relations between the Free City and Warsaw.

Chapter 3's focus is on Kattowitz, and first considers how it experienced the nationalist tumult in Upper Silesia in the years after the First World War, culminating in the national plebiscite, the Third Silesian Uprising and the region's partition between Germany and Poland. It then discusses how Kattowitz was transformed into the capital of the new Silesian Voivodeship and how the Upper Silesian Geneva Convention struggled to gain legitimacy in this contested national space. Finally, this chapter examines the stalemate which emerged between the German minority and the Voivodeship authorities which reached its nadir with the arrest and trial of German nationalist leader Otto Ulitz.

Though nationalism was a feature of everyday life in Danzig and Kattowitz during the 1920s, this thesis will demonstrate that it did not make the process through which national identity was negotiated any less complex in these contested spaces.

Chapter 2: Danzig, 1919-1930

Danzig's history has always been intimately tied to its harbour and its strategic position at the mouth of the Vistula. However, while nationalist historiographies have sought to bifurcate the city's past as 'German' before 1945 and 'Polish' after, throughout the city's history, the dominant culture of the city often did not dictate Danzig's allegiance. First recorded as the Slavic settlement 'Gyddannyzc' in 997, Danzig was ruled by the Pomeranian dukes, themselves under Polish suzerainty until the Teutonic Order violently occupied the city in 1308. It soon became a thriving medieval port and the now primarily German-speaking city joined the Hanseatic League formally in the fourteenth century. In 1440 Danzig alongside the other Hanseatic cities of Thorn/Torún and Elbing/Elbląg formed the Prussian Confederation against the Teutonic Knights. After a successful rebellion against the Order, Danzig formally became a part of Royal Prussia and, in a union with the Polish crown, a part of the Kingdom of Poland in 1466.[14] From the Union of Lublin in 1569, it was a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth until the Second Partition of the Commonwealth in 1793 when it was forcibly incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia and made the capital of the province of 'West Prussia'.

After the city was besieged by French forces during the Napoleonic Wars in 1808, the city was made a 'Free City' which, Elizabeth Clark has noted, was greeted enthusiastically by Danzig's élite 'until it became evident that Napoleon's goals were defined primarily by his interest in the city as a mustering point for his invasion of Russia'.[15] The city was reincorporated into Prussia after the Congress of Vienna and while Danzig was once again cut off from its historic Polish hinterland, the city's port remained the focal point of the city's economy over the course of the nineteenth century while Danzig itself became more culturally integrated into Prussia and, from 1871, the German Reich. The city's national status began to seem settled until it once again became a very live issue when, during the First World War, Woodrow Wilson's fourteen

[14] For more on Danzig and its early modern history in Royal Prussia, see: Karin Friedrich, *The Other Prussia: Royal Prussia, Poland and Liberty, 1569-1772* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000).
[15] Elizabeth M. Clark, 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig, 1926-1927: Foundations for Reconciliation' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Kansas, 1998), p. 16.

points speech promised to a reconstituted Polish state 'free and secure Polish access to the sea'.[16]

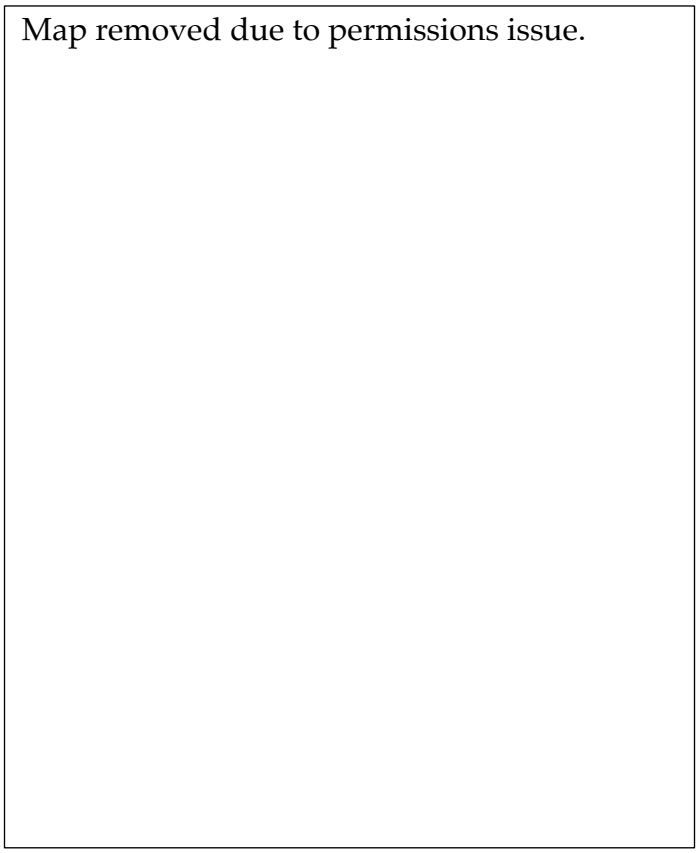
2.1: The establishment of the Free City

At the Paris Peace Conference, Danzig became a point of contention in negotiations between France, Britain and the United States over the reconstruction of Poland. Poland, represented by Roman Dmowski, had expected to receive Danzig and the Commission on Polish Affairs, responsible for formally delimiting the new Polish state's borders, included the city within the newly delineated Polish corridor when it reported to the Council of Great Powers on 19 March 1919. A week after hearing the Commission's proposals, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George issued his 'Fontainebleau Memorandum'. The purpose of this document was to lay out the British Empire's aims for the treaty with Germany and, in it, Lloyd George articulated the position that Germany would refuse to sign too harsh a settlement which, in turn, could precipitate a Bolshevist revolution in the Reich. As part of the memorandum, Lloyd George argued against the incorporation of Danzig into Poland, arguing that to do so would 'constitute an avoidable provocation'.[17] Instead, the British diplomat James Headlam Morley, along with American delegate Sidney Mezes engineered a compromise with the Free City model: Danzig would become a quasi-independent 'Free City'. This would enable it to act as Poland's 'access to the sea' while the city's German-speaking population would avoid incorporation into Poland. After liaising with United States President Woodrow Wilson, Lloyd George persuaded Poland's greatest ally at the Conference, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, to agree to the compromise on 1 April 1919.

While the 'Free City' compromise for Danzig was ratified by the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 it would take eighteen months until the Free City of Danzig was declared on 15 November 1920. The treaty dealt specifically with Danzig but did so only by describing its most basic structure as a 'Free City', its borders and Poland's rights to the port. This lack of concrete detail created ambiguity which both Danzig and Poland sought to exploit for their

[16] Quoted in: Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers: Six Months that Changed the World* (London: John Murray, 2001), p. 217.
[17] Smith, p. 137.

own advantage. The establishing of the Free City, therefore, resembled more a process than an event. This chapter explores how Danzigers responded to this process and how Germans attempted to influence its outcome, either by stopping it and allowing Danzig to remain a part of Germany, or as more frequently by applying as much pressure as possible to make the Free City as advantageous to the city's substantial German population as possible, thereby preserving the city's 'German character'. It will become apparent that this helped to lay the groundwork for Danzig-Poland relations for much of the rest of the 1920s.



Map 2.1 – The territory of the Free City of Danzig

Source: Loew, p. 189.

The territory of the Free City of Danzig formally left the Reich at midnight on 10 January 1920, the night the Treaty of Versailles came into force. As a constitution for the Free City had not yet been agreed between Danzig, Poland and the League of Nations, the League assumed sovereignty of the city. British diplomat Sir Reginald Tower became League High Commissioner while the city's Prussian bureaucracy retained most everyday administration.

The imposition of League rule in Danzig, while not unexpected, was still highly contentious and widely opposed. The *Danziger Volksstimme*, published by the Danzig Social Democrats (SPD), denounced the coming Free City, describing it as a reactionary force which would lead to Danzig becoming the 'playground of international capital'.[18] Unlike in Upper Silesia where nationalist rhetoric generally took precedence over the language of class solidarity, the Danzig SPD interpreted the city's detachment through a class-conscious framework. To them, the creation of the Free City was counterrevolutionary because Danzig had taken part in the German revolution and therefore helped build the new democratic Germany. There is a palpable sense that the SPD did not want to miss out on the great Weimar experiment: now, the *Volksstimme* argues, is the moment to defend revolutionary Danzig. This hard line would eventually soften as the electoral threat posed by the more radical Independent Social Democrats receded and swift reincorporation into the Reich became a more distant prospect. At least at the outset this anger from the Left in Danzig suggests an overriding belief in a German national identity, which cut across class and political divisions in Danzig.

While not spilling over into violence, Danzig's situation prompted significant anti-Polish sentiment. This manifested on 22 July 1920 when amidst the climax of the Polish-Soviet War dockworkers at the Port of Danzig went on strike to avoid transporting Polish materiel. While on ostensibly pacifist grounds,[19] it is hard to not to view the strike as an anti-Polish popular action. The strike would last over a month and the end coincided with both the Battle of Warsaw and also the Second Silesian Uprising. Polish authorities viewed the strike as violating their fundamental right of access to the port and complained to Sir Reginald.[20] He was largely powerless in the dispute as General Richard Haking, chief of Allied forces in Danzig, privately argued that intervening would require a military occupation of the city.[21] That this anti-Polish feeling was able to manifest into direct action, reflects some anticipation among the dockers that Poland's defeat might lead to the reincorporation of Danzig back into Germany (although this was far from guaranteed).

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[18] 'An die werktätige Bevölkerung der Freien Stadt Danzig!', *Danziger Volksstimme* (*DVS*), 17 January 1920, p. 1.
[19] Marcus M. Payk, '"Emblems of Sovereignty": The Internationalization of Danzig and the Polish Post Office Dispute, 1919-25' in *Beyond Versailles,* pp. 215-236 (p. 219).
[20] 'Noch keine Löschung der polnischen Munition', *Danziger Zeitung* (*DZ*), 23 July 1920, p. 1.
[21] Payk, p. 219.

In response to the strike the Constituent Assembly, elected in May to draft and ratify the Free City's constitution, declared Danzig's official neutrality in the Polish-Soviet war and then voted to retrospectively justify dockers' refusal to transport Polish materiel through the port.[22] In the Assembly elections the right-wing nationalist DNVP went from fourth place in the 1919 German Reichstag elections to become the largest party with thirty-four seats in the Free City's new legislative assembly, the 120-strong Volkstag. It profited from a Left divided between the Social Democrats and Independent Social Democrats, but this result also suggests a hardening of national attitudes in Danzig in the intervening year and broader anti-Polish feeling in the Free City. The DNVP were closely followed by the USPD and SPD, which had twenty-one and nineteen seats, respectively. While this shows that support for the nationalist right in the Free City was by no means hegemonic, its early dominance would set the tenor of relations with Poland which began poorly and any attempt to improve them would only really come with the election of the Social Democrats in 1927.

Beyond simple anti-Polish popular action, it is possible to interpret the strike as an instance of cross-border solidarity with other German borderland communities threatened with incorporation into Poland. The strike gained a greater German nationalist resonance when the Second Silesian Uprising broke out but this was not the only opportunity for Danzigers to express their solidarity with other German border communities against the Poles. On 22 August a large advert for '*Grenz-Spende*' ('Border donations') appeared in the *Danziger Zeitung* placed by the newspaper's own publishers.[23] This sought to solicit donations to support Upper Silesian Germans and their efforts against the Poles and while solicited throughout Germany, such appeals had particular resonance in Danzig, also facing a very uncertain future during the Summer of 1920. 'With the help of the *Grenz-Spende*, we have already saved East and West Prussia', the advert reads, 'now it's Upper Silesia's turn'. It is difficult to determine the efficacy of these campaigns and how much was actually raised by Danzigers for their Upper Silesian 'brothers and sisters', but what they do convey is a strong sense of attachment to a German national identity among Danzigers despite their formal detachment from the Reich. This

[22] 'Frankreich gegen Danzigs Neutralität', *DVS*, 23 August 1920, p. 1.
[23] *DZ*, 22 August 1920, p. 2.

attachment ran deep and the intentionally anational and technocratic state formation of the Free City was unlikely to challenge this and produce a nationally indifferent populace.

The Free City was formally proclaimed on 15 November 1920 after successful last-minute negotiations on Danzig's constitution. The event's long gestation might explain the relatively muted response in the city's press. Indeed, the proclamation represented a moment of resigned defeat for most Danzigers as their detachment from Germany was now fully formalised. Equally the city's new important relationship with Poland was established, though this was little remarked upon. The Free City was formally proclaimed at a special sitting of the Constituent Assembly at which a series of deputies of made polemical speeches against the Free City. USPD deputy Max Plettner decried the Ambassador's Conference which finalised Danzig's constitution as concluding without 'protecting the economic and political freedoms' of what he called the '*Freistaat Danzig*' ('Free State of Danzig'), and instead 'promoting the economic interests of Poland and Great Britain'.[24] Elizabeth M. Clark perceptively comments on this use of '*Freistaat*', which implies a sovereign republic, over the official German nomenclature '*Freie Stadt*', arguing that '*Freistaat*' was often used by both German politicians and bureaucrats intentionally to suggest Danzig had greater autonomy than it had actually been granted.[25] Danzigers' refusal to absorb the ramification of the Free City compromise effectively translated into the linguistic realm, an intentional confusion which lasted the length of the Free City's existence.

From the Right, DNVP Constituent Assembly president Wilhelm Reinhard continued, reminding the other deputies and dignitaries of the Danzig's old Latin motto *'Nec temere, nec timide'* ('Neither rashly nor timidly'). His invocation of it suggests that while the Free City compromise may have damaged the city's pride, Danzig would not be afraid to fight back against Poland and the Allies. These frank views are hardly surprising but the openness with which they were expressed is still quite startling: the Free City was beginning its existence with Danzigers bound together by their dislike of the Free City as an institution. Indeed, the

[24] 'Eröffnung der Sitzung', *DZ*, 16 November 1920, p. 1.
[25] Elizabeth M. Clark, 'Borderland of the Mind: The Free City of Danzig and the Sovereignty Question', *German Politics and Society*, 35.3 (2017), pp. 24–37 (p. 25).

Volksstimme ironically declared the proclamation of Free City the 'proclamation of "freedom"'.[26] The article uses wordplay to emphasise that the 'Free City', which was now apparently 'free', was not so as it had been forcibly detached from Germany. Until Danzig was allowed to return to the great 'cultural community' (*Kulturgemeinschaft*) of Germany, the article argued, the people of Danzig will 'continue being German, feeling and thinking as Germans'.

The reaction to the Free City's proclamation by the German press was similarly negative. Some reports convey a palpable sense of loss; the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* argued that 'maintaining the close ties of the young state with the motherland should be our constant concern'.[27] Others conveyed more a sense of anger and derision. In one cartoon on the front cover of *Der Wahre Jacob* entitled 'Christmas gift-giving at the League of Nations' (Fig. 2.1), David Lloyd George is dressed as the *Weihnachtsmann*/Father Christmas and has given a child, identified as Poland in the caption, Danzig's rocking horse. He looks angrily at another, the Deutscher Michel, with a whip in his hand: 'What his heart desires to one,/a flogging to the other', the end of the caption reads. Danzig, therefore, is another in a long list of national humiliations Germany must endure due to perceived vindictiveness of the Allied powers and their entrenched anti-German bias.

[26] 'Danzigs "Freiheitlicher" Schicksalstag: Die Proklamierung der "Freiheit"' *DVS*, 16 November 1920, p. 1.
[27] 'Die Freie Stadt Danzig. Ihre Verkündung im Parlament', *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 August 1920, p. 1.

Figure 2.1 – 'The League of Nations' Christmas gift-giving': *Der Wahre Jacob* cartoon

Der Wahre Jacob, 22 November 1920, p. 1.

Another cartoon, in *Simplicissimus*, portrays Poland quite horrifically as a *Rogatywka*-wearing sea monster with a pig's head flailing about in a muddy pond (Fig. 2.2). The monster's flotation aids suggest it cannot even swim and the caption reads 'after Poland has become a seafaring nation, the necessity arises for it to develop a national Neptune'. By deploying such shocking imagery, the cartoon deploys entrenched racialised German stereotypes of 'Polish backwardness' to ridicule the entire premise of the Free City compromise: Poles are so 'uncivilised' they will not know what to do with Danzig and its *German* port. That this cartoon was published in an ostensibly liberal periodical shows how widespread these bigoted attitudes towards Poles still were within German civil society.

Figure 2.2 – 'Danzig': *Simplicissimus* cartoon

Simplicissimus, 17 November 1920, p. 16.

These depictions rely on these two tightly-entangled cultural tropes, of the Allies punishing Germany, and of Polish 'backwardness', to try to delegitimise the entire Free City project. They argue that what was really happening was the loss of a 'pure' German city to help an inevitably unstable Polish state. With such extreme cartoons representing the views of both (newly delineated) Reich Germans and Danziger Germans, it is perhaps not surprising that the Free City's relations with Poland began poorly. The detachment from the Reich and its new Weimar democracy also created a void within the Danziger identity. What did it mean to be a Danziger, now a 'Free City' citizen rather than a Reich citizen? History as well as anti-Polishness would provide some of the answer.

2.2: 'National' symbols and the past in the Free City

The entire Free City compromise was a product of historical circumstance, but its conception also relied upon particular readings of the city's history. While the Allies recalled the Napoleonic Free City and conceived it as essentially a neutrally-administered if German-populated gateway to Poland, Danzigers emphasised the city's older Hanseatic past but in doing so reinterpreted through an anachronistically national lens. By doing this, the city's élite made the city's history a thoroughly *German* history, seeking to legitimise German control of the city and its port but also erase Poland's important and long-standing role in the city's history. This nationalised recollection and use of historically-imbued symbols also acted to reassure the city's German speakers and create some form of meaning in the void created by their detachment from the wider German *Volk*. There was some reticence for a wholesale adoption of these symbols as part of a wider Danziger identity, however: a local civic identity was ultimately not an example of 'national indifference' and could never really challenge the German national identity that much of the city's German-speaking population had not abandoned. This section goes some way to explore how this detachment manifested physically and symbolically.

During the process of negotiating the Free City's constitution, the Danzig Senate published several draft constitutions to garner popular support for their specific proposals and therefore greater leverage against Poland and the League. Most significantly, these drafts lacked reference to the protected rights of Free City's Polish-speaking population. They also amended the name of the new Danzig polity, referring to the '*Freie und Hansestadt Danzig*',[28] equally emphasising the city's new quasi-independent 'Free City' status alongside its Hanseatic lineage. This historical allusion was a fundamentally political act which characterised the Danzig Senate's approach to the city's past: they sought to reappropriate history to justify German claims to the city and thereby delegitimise its forced internationalisation.

[28] Heinrich Sahm, *Entwurf einer Verfassung für die Freie und Hansestadt Danzig* (Danzig: Buchdrückerei Carl Bäcker, 1919).

The term '*Hansestadt'* in the German popular imagination immediately conjured the seafaring and enterprising cosmopolitan port cities of the Hanseatic League. This League dominated northern European commerce throughout the Middle Ages with a trading network around the North and Baltic seas that stretched from London and Bergen in the West to Reval/Tallinn and Novgorod in the East. The League was made up of merchants from across the Holy Roman Empire and headquartered in Lübeck, and as such, its legacy has come to be particularly identified with Germany and *Deutschtum*, largely due to the direct actions of nineteenth century German nationalists. The evocation of the Hanseatic in '*Hansestadt Danzig*' is therefore intended to place the city alongside the other explicitly German *Hansestädte* of Hamburg, Lübeck, Bremen and Rostock. This is not altogether inaccurate as Danzig had been an important member of the Hanseatic League due to its strategic position on the Baltic Sea at the mouth of the Vistula and therefore a gateway to medieval East Central Europe. Its Hanseatic heritage, however, did not mean that medieval Danzig had been an independent city state. Rather, Danzig had been an integral part of Royal Prussia within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after close to 150 years of occupation by the Teutonic Order. Moreover, this heavy emphasis on the Hansa tradition in official discourse in the Free City also elided the city's century of Prussian history. Elizabeth M. Clark in particular notes how, by 1914, the city had declined relative to Germany's other port cities.[29] This decline, she argues, transformed the city's civic identity, reflecting more the new Prussianised *Beamtenstadt* Danzig.[30] This discontinuity makes this reference to '*Hansestadt* Danzig' while not entirely ahistorical, at least reliant more upon the essentially nostalgic symbolism of the Hanseatic, detached from history and evoked to serve a specific contemporary political function. Through this 'implied continuity with the past', the new evoked Hansa effectively acts as a Hobsbawmian 'invented tradition' for Danzigers.[31] It is therefore worth further interrogating the function of this revival of the Hanseatic by Danzig's élite in 1920.

The Romantic revival of the 'Hanseatic' as part of German national identity more broadly took place alongside the rise of German nationalism during the nineteenth century. Katherine

[29] Clark, 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig, 1926-1927', p. 14.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions' in *The Invention of Tradition* ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), pp. 1-14 (p. 1).

Aaslestad locates its emergence in Hamburg and Lübeck in the post-Napoleonic period after 1815 whereby it underpinned a new 'northern German' identity to act as a political and cultural counterbalance to the larger German states of Prussia, Bavaria and Saxony.[32] This Hanseatic past was therefore nationalised as a *German* past. Indeed, Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck and Rostock all today refer to themselves as '*Hansestädte*' to emphasise their historic independence and prosperity (and in the former two to additionally legitimise their status as city-state *Bundesländer*). In contrast, the evocation of '*Hansestadt'* in the Free City sought to emphasise the city's deep, historic links with Germany and the German *Volk* over its historic relationship with Poland and, in doing so, imagine a past as medieval city-state comparable to Lübeck and Hamburg. Here 'Hanseatic' essentially functions as coterminous with 'German' and, politically, the Hanseatic served to legitimise German leadership of the Free City. It is ironic that the cosmopolitanism implied by the evocation of the multi-lingual Hanseatic League is in fact little more than cover for a German nationalism which in the early 1920s was beginning to take a strongly *völkisch* turn.

Ultimately the Allied powers vetoed formal reference to the '*Hansestadt*' and so Danzig became simply a Free City. While this official distinction may have been off-limits to Danzigers, the evocation of the Hanseatic was regularly instrumentalised as part of wider processes that attempted to construct a thoroughly Germanised Danzig identity. This deeply nationalised Hanseatic aesthetic, which functioned effectively as a '*Hanse*-as-logo', attempted to legitimise Germans' 'moral authority' to govern the city when arguments of self-determination were deemed insufficient. This 'new' identity was largely constructed through the erasure of the city's historic pre-partition relationship with Poland. Indeed, the nationalist-Hanseatic narrative would be undermined, as Dirk Schümer has noted, if it was made known that during this 'Golden Age' Danzig's ruling élite often sided with the Polish aristocracy against the 'German' Teutonic order so as to preserve the city's autonomy.[33]

After 1920 there was a renewed interest in the city's pre-Prussian history as part of a wider

[32] Katherine Aaslestad, *Place and Politics: Local Identity, Civic Culture and German Nationalism during the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
[33] Dirk Schümer, 'Die Hanse' in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. 2, ed. by Etienne François and Hagen Schulze (Munich: CH Beck, 2002), p. 377.

construction of a collective memory in the Free City. Among the many nationalist tracts published in the Free City at this time, there were multiple histories of Danzig published from a specifically nationalist and often *völkisch* approach.[34] These emphasised the city's German character and German population. Ludwig Mahlau's *Geschichte der Freien Stadt Danzig*, published in 1921, does this through a teleological narrative of Danzig's history as a parallel history to German national teleology where the incorporation into Prussia and the German Empire are the clear end goals of the German Danzigers. To Mahlau, in his final particularly polemical section, the creation of the Free City represented the 'violent detachment of Danzig from its German *Vaterland*'.[35] Essentially the Free City was to be treated as a temporary historical aberration in a greater historical arc, much as the Napoleonic Free City was. This treatment of the contemporary demonstrates that these histories were not intended as merely expressions of civic pride: they were actively employed as part of a part of wider nationalist political project to reaffirm Danzig's rightful place within Germany and the wider *Deutschtum*. Indeed, for readers in Weimar Germany, these histories were intended to apply pressure for treaty revision. Mahlau was writing 'also to set alight the hearts of those in the Reich so […] we will not be forgotten because we are German and want to remain German'.[36] The interest in Danzig's history was thus not solely rooted in collective introspection but had explicit political purpose. This renewed interest in medieval Danzig can be read as an explicit manifestation of what Svetlana Boym has termed 'restorative nostalgia', which is concerned with an imagined restoration of the past and is built upon a '*rhetoric* of continuity with the historic past',[37] rather than 'actual' or 'organic' continuity with the past. It is difficult to gauge how much these histories were read outside of the Free City but they do provide an opportunity to explore how Danzigers saw themselves and crucially *where* they saw their place in the wider *Deutschtum*.

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[34] Ludwig Mahlau, *Geschichte der Freien Stadt Danzig* (Danzig: Danziger Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1921); Franz Steffen, *4000 Jahre bezeugen Danzigs Deutschtum. Geschichte der ethnographischen, geschichtlichen, kulturellen, geistigen und künstlerischen Verbundenheit Danzigs mit Deutschland von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (Danzig: Westpreußische Verlag, 1932).

[35] Mahlau, p. 104.

[36] Ibid, p. 9.

[37] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic, 2001), pp. 41-42: emphasis added.

Another history, Franz Steffen's *4000 Jahre bezeugen Danzigs Deutschtum*, similarly aimed to substantiate and legitimise German claims to Danzig through providing a history of 'Danzig's ethnographical, historical, cultural, intellectual and artistic closeness to Germany'.[38] Published in 1932, before the Nazi seizure of power in Germany and the Free City, it clearly continues the ideas put forward by Mahlau and others. It particularly builds upon the earlier volume's pseudo-scientific 'ethnographic' justifications for German sovereignty, incorporating developments in *'Ostforschung'* which had taken root as a respectable academic endeavour across Germany over the course of the 1920s. As a discipline, *Ostforschung* emerged from the shock of wartime defeat and loss of territories and sought to scientifically justify German hegemony in Germany's east, drawing on old nineteenth-century German stereotypes of Slavs while applying novel eugenicist ideas.[39] *Ostforschung* went on to substantiate Nazi ideological concepts like *Lebensraum* and a more *völkisch* and 'ethnic-irredentist', as Winson Chu terms it, German nationalism that had territorial ambitions beyond the Reich's 1914 frontiers.[40] Often it too relied upon an invocation of the Middle Ages, this time the Teutonic Order-led settlement of German speakers eastwards, by calling for a new 'civilising' German expansion eastwards,[41] its demands far exceeding the return of Germany's 'lost territories', such as the Free City and Upper Silesia.

A striking similarity between the two histories is how they both explore Danzig's seventeenth century 'Golden Age' through the lens of the city's architecture. Mahlau explicitly links the development in quality of the city's architecture to Danzig's 'Germanness', writing that 'the city of Danzig developed its particular German character with an ever-greater blossoming; in particular, the city's architecture reached an astonishing peak.'[42] The city's historic built environment, from the grand buildings such as the ornate Rathaus and imposing Marienkirche to the more everyday tall, thin red-brick warehouses with ubiquitous Dutch gables which lined up along the Mottlau, was used and commodified as symbolic of the Hanseatic past which the Free City had inherited. However, these uses of the city's

[38] Steffen.
[39] For an expansive account of the development of *Ostforschung* see: Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of* Ostforschung *in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988).
[40] Winson Chu, *The Polish Minority in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), pp. 30-33.
[41] Burleigh, pp. 6-7.
[42] Mahlau, p. 42.

architecture a decade apart suggest a particular power that these buildings held in the construction of Danzig's collective memory. More than a simple everyday visual shorthand for the past, these buildings were the active embodiment of the city's sea-faring Hanseatic heritage, the city's 'Golden Age', onto which popular ideas of former glory and imagined nostalgia more generally could be projected. Using Pierre Nora's influential framework of '*lieux de mémoire*' or 'sites of memory',[43] if the Hanseatic past represented one of these 'sites of memory' then the city's architecture served as a focal point in the city's collective memory. This collective memory bound Danzigers together through a shared, explicitly German past and therefore this architecture was explicitly German, even if the buildings had been constructed when Danzig was a part of the Kingdom of Poland. So important was this need to maintain a continuity with the past through the built environment that during the 1920s the historic centre of Danzig was fiercely protected by the city's architects with all attempts to introduce any 'avant-garde' architecture to the Old Town thwarted.[44] As the city's architecture became a site of memory in its own right, it needed to be defended, much as the collective memory of Danzigers needed to be defended against the perceived Polish foe.

This revival of the Hanseatic operated on multiple levels. While on one level it functioned as a form of collective nostalgia for Danzig's 'Golden Age', its evocation also had certain *völkisch* and anti-Polish overtones: the Hanseatic League could also be celebrated in their role in driving the medieval settlement of the Prussian East by German speakers who stood in opposition to the 'pagan' Slavs. In this sense, it prefigured the National Socialist appropriation of the Hanseatic past which, according to Schümer, employed historians to create 'a patriotic and heroic image of the Hanseatic League' to stand as a German bastion against the Poles, thereby reinterpreting the League as a key antecedent in Nazi policies of *Lebensraum*.[45] It is worth noting that while this ideology became increasingly extreme and *völkisch* during the 1920s, the medieval, inherent in evocations of the Hanseatic League, was being evoked by the irredentist German far-right as early as 1920. In one DNVP campaign poster from the 1920

[43] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*' *Representations* 26 (1989), pp. 7-24.
[44] Malgorzata Omdlanowska, 'The Question of National and Regional Identity on the Example of Polish and German Interpretations of Gdansk Architecture in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Acta historiae artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 49 (2008), pp. 294-303 (p. 301).
[45] Schümer, p. 385.

Reichstag elections (Fig. 2.3) a Teutonic knight, representing both *Deutschtum* and the German East, is shown being attacked by two more modern, caricatured Poles: one is holding him down so that the other, wearing a tatty military uniform and orientalised with a large earring, can beat him. The poster reads 'Save the East!', casting the new 'battle' over Germany's eastern 'Lost Territories' as a distinctly medieval yet thoroughly apocalyptic clash of civilisations.

Figure 2.3 – 'Save the East' DNVP campaign poster from 1920

Source: University of Minnesota Library

In 1925 national symbols caused a genuine crisis in the Free City. On 5 January 1925 the Polish Post Office erected ten postboxes in the centre of Danzig, allowing letters to be sent directly to Poland without going through the Free City's own post office. The Polish Post Office had already maintained a presence in the port area of the Free City but now intended to expand their services, due to an apparent exploitable ambiguity in the treaties governing Danzig's sovereignty. To many the mere presence of such a 'foreign' national symbol in Free City

territory represented an attempt by Poland to 'Polonise' Danzig,[46] and to Senate President Heinrich Sahm and the Free City's governing élite this was an unacceptable incursion by Poland into the sovereignty of the Free City. It is quite apt that such a diplomatic incident was caused by such a symbol of Andersonian modernisation as the Polish Post Office. The Free City, despite its close links to Poland, was able to maintain the façade of separation through its own national symbols, such as a separate currency, its own passports and indeed, its own postal service. As many disputes between Poland and the Free City were, the Polish Post Office dispute was escalated to the League of Nations, first to the League council in Geneva and then to the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) at the Hague. To Sahm, however, as he explained before the Volkstag, the Post Office Dispute was not really about the erection of Polish Post Office boxes in Danzig. Indeed, he conceded that to those outside the Free City, arguing about post boxes had the 'air of the comical about it'.[47] Instead, the dispute was really over Danzig's 'sovereign rights' and 'is the Free City an independent state or not?': a telling concession from Sahm.

Both the League Council and the PCIJ overruled this opinion finding entirely in Poland's favour. These decisions went some way to end the initial period of political ambiguity surrounding the Free City's sovereignty which had disguised how wide the gap between nationalist rhetoric and the geopolitical reality was. The Free City was an inherently legalistic construction and as such, according to Marcus M. Payk, its sovereignty was 'fragile and unstable' rather than based in 'natural' national self-determination.[48] The Free City never really internalised this, often due to animus against Poland, but imagining a German Danzig, rooted in a proud German heritage, could only go so far in projecting nationhood. The Polish Post Office dispute demonstrated the limits of this nationalist belief in Danzig's sovereignty but as it took place proposals for a less combative relationship towards Poland was beginning to be discussed publicly. This new '*Verständigungspolitik*' would consume Free City politics for much of the rest of the decade, with mixed success.

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[46] Quoted in: Payk, p. 224.
[47] *Verhandlungen des Volkstags der Freien Stadt Danzig. 2. Wahlperiode 1924/1927*, vol. 8 (Danzig: Volkstag Danzig, 1925), p. 1387.
[48] Payk, p. 223.

2.3: Normalisation and '*Verständigungspolitik*': The beginnings of a new relationship between the Free City and Poland?

Section 2.2 explored the ways in which the Free City sought to articulate its new identity through new-old 'national' symbols and it did so by constructing a glorious Hanseatic past so as to fill the void created by its detachment from the Reich. In this section I shall focus on the period between the Volkstag elections of 1927 and 1930 to explore how the relative autonomy of the Free City's political institutions allowed it, to a great degree, to avoid an intractable stalemate with Poland. Key to this was the pragmatic adoption of a new '*Verständigungspolitik*' ('policy of understanding') towards Poland which allowed Danzig the opportunity to forge a new productive relationship with the Polish state. Crucially, however, despite some diplomatic successes, the national question would never really go away. Indeed, major disputes between the Free City and Poland would remain, particularly over the rising threat of the new Polish port at Gdynia, and the policy of understanding was not universally supported. This section also investigates how much the policy was able to provide an 'alternative path' for the Free City, away from a revanchist institutional paralysis.

Both the internal political context within the Free City and the international context surrounding it had significantly changed and stabilised by the time the third Volkstag elections were held in 1927. Danzig had experienced a severe economic shock following the outbreak of the German-Polish tariff war in 1925, with a slump in exports through the port and unemployment rising rapidly. This occurred less than a year after Danzig introduced its new currency, the Gulden, and while Poland was still trying to stabilise its own new unified currency, the Złoty. However much German nationalist politicians in Danzig may have refuted the extent to which the Free City was now orientated towards Poland, Danzig's economic difficulties highlighted the interdependence between the two economies. The economic crisis spread to the Free City's politics when the DNVP-dominated right-liberal Senate fell after failing to pass a budget for the financial year 1925-1926.[49] It was replaced by a

[49] A notable feature of the Free City's political system was the continuity of its governance. This is in large part due to how the governing Senate was indirectly-elected and shielded from the mass politics of the Volkstag. The Senate consisted of 22 members; eight were 'professional' career bureaucrat senators including the Senate President, elected for four-year terms during which they could not be

short-lived SPD-led administration which succeeded in negotiating for a loan from Germany, allowing it to run a budget deficit. The wider European economic stabilisation also made possible the greater role Germany was willing to play to support (and subsidise) the Free City after 1925.[50] This support had been strengthened by the Locarno treaties signed in December 1925 and the 'Spirit of Locarno' enabled Germany to join the League of Nations in September 1926. While the post-Locarno prospect of treaty revision was enticing for many in the Free City, Germany's support for Danzig through both international institutions such as the League Council or direct financial subsidies was a more pressing concern for the Senate.

The Free City's economy only really recovered in 1926 as the Polish economy stabilised and alternative markets were found for Upper Silesian coal, particularly in Scandinavia. Another factor in the economic stabilisation of Poland was the May 1926 coup d'état which brought Marshal Józef Piłsudski to power, as his authoritarian rule ended political instability within the Second Republic. Unlike in Kattowitz where Piłsudski's *Sanacja* regime intensified anti-German Polonisation, the Free City directly benefited from Poland's economic stabilisation by the new government. The Polish political system's new *Sanacja*-imposed stability also created a continuity of relations with the Free City which in turn helped create a political environment in which *Verständigungspolitik* could prove viable.

The third Volkstag election took place on 13 November 1927, an election Clark describes as being the 'most normal' in the history of the Free City.[51] She qualifies this by referring to the unprecedently calm economic and geopolitical environment in which it took place,[52] but this election was also significant in how it presented Danzigers with two distinct visions for the future of the Free City. While other material issues played a role, the main focus of the election was the proposed '*Verständigungspolitik*', which had been advocated for by the Social

removed from office. The remaining fourteen, including the Senate Vice-President, were elected by the Volkstag, did not receive a salary and could be recalled by the Volkstag. Reform of the Senate had been a priority of the SPD and some of the centrist parties since it was created in 1920, although this would only happen in 1930 when it was reduced to 12 members, 7 political and 4 professional: Clark, 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig', pp. 63-64.

[50] Christoph Kimmich, *The Free City: Danzig and German Foreign Policy 1919-1934* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1968), p. 101.

[51] Clark, 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig' p. 281.

[52] Ibid, pp. 281-282.

Democrats since their brief spell in government in 1925-1926. This sought to reset the Free City's poor relations with Poland and put them on a better footing for the future, which it was expected would also benefit both parties economically. Key to this would be reducing the need for disputes to be resolved by the League, such as over the Polish Post Office and Polish plans to build a munitions depot at Westerplatte.

'*Verständigungspolitik'* essentially acted as a repudiation of the DNVP's time in office with their perceived belligerent approach to Poland. As such it was deeply opposed by the German Nationals, who even published an election pamphlet written by the director of Danzig State Archives, Karl Josef Kaufmann, entitled 'What does history teach us about the *Verständigungspolitik* with Poland?'.[53] The answer, according to the pamphlet, was that such a policy would bring 'only downsides' for Danzig and its German community.[54] If it seems surprising for a civil servant to make such a partisan intervention in the election, this can be explained by another of the Social Democrats' lines of attack against the German Nationals: in government the DNVP had supposedly created an oligarchic '*Beamtenclique*' (a 'civil servants' clique') of their members among the upper echelons of the Free City's administration.[55] This was even reported by *Vorwärts* to include 'former army officers, Kapp Putschists and Baltic barons'.[56] In contrast to this, the SPD presented themselves as the party which would clean up the Free City's bloated political institutions. Key to this was a reduction in size of the both the Volkstag and the Senate, which had long been a point of contention as the Free City had inherited much of the Prussian bureaucracy of the province of West Prussia but now comprised territory of only 350,000 inhabitants.

On election day, Sunday 13 November 1927, turnout was up four percentage points to 85.4% compared to the last elections in 1923. The SPD, which had been expected to win following their strong performance in the municipal elections, made great gains winning forty-two seats in the 120-member Volkstag with 33.8% of the votes. This increase of almost 10 percentage

[53] Heinrich Sprenger, *Heinrich Sahm. Kommunalpolitiker und Staatsmann* (Cologne and West Berlin: Grote, 1969), p. 172.
[54] Ibid.
[55] 'Danzig am Scheideweg', *Vorwärts* 12 November 1927, pp. 1-2 (p. 2).
[56] Ibid.

points led the *Volksstimme* to declare a 'brilliant victory for social democracy',[57] and it was expected that the SPD would lead the new Senate. The DNVP, victorious in the 1920 and 1923 elections, was reduced to second place, securing just twenty-five seats. An alternative indicator for the relative 'normality' of the election was that the far-right in the Free City was reduced from seven seats to just two. This combined with the poor showing by the DNVP, suggests the lack of appetite for the more abrasive nationalist politics of the years before. Equally it could also suggest that allure of the far-right had dissipated with the improved economic climate. Indeed, there is little indication that the Nazis, who won just one seat in 1927, would become the second largest party in the Free City at the next Volkstag elections in 1930.

Political Party	***1927 seats***	***1923 seats***
SPD	42	30
DNVP	25	33
Centre Party	18	15
KPD	8	11
German Liberals	4	8
German Danziger Party	5	6
National Liberals	5	*(Split from the German Liberals)*
Polish Party	3	5
German Socials	1	7
National Socialists	1	0
Others	8	5

Table 2.1 – 1927 Volkstag election results

Source: 'Glänzende Wahlsieg der Sozialdemokratie', *DVS*, 14 November 1927, p. 1.

Most surprisingly the Polish Party's representation in the Volkstag, an unofficial metric of the Free City's Polish population, also decreased from five seats to three. It is difficult to determine which parties Polish voters would have voted for instead. In this less nationally contested election, they might have voted for the Centre Party, which represented the Free City's Catholic population. It is also not inconceivable that some might have voted for the SPD to

[57] 'Glänzende Wahlsieg der Sozialdemokratie', *DVS,* 14 November 1927, p. 1.

endorse *Verständigungspolitik* but some of the German nationalist overtones coming from the Social Democrats make this less plausible. Clark suggests that the decline in success of the Polish Party can be explained by the divisions within the Free City's Polish community:[58] rather than the Polish Party being the central locus of Polish nationalist activism, the Gmina Polska society played a more active role in the lives of Free City Poles. However due to its clerical and pro-National Democracy positions even it could only count on the support of half of Polish Danzigers.[59] These divisions extended to the press where the only Polish language newspaper in the Free City, the *Gazeta Gdańska,* was distrusted by Warsaw due to its independent editorial line. As such it was boycotted in official Polish government offices such as the railway administration in favour of the German-language yet pro-Warsaw *Baltische Presse.*[60]

The German press reported the Danzig results as part of a broader swing away from the DNVP, by now a part of the Reich Cabinet, and towards the SPD. On the same day, state elections had also taken place in Hesse and Bremen, in all of which the SPD had come first. This led both the *Vossische Zeitung* and the *Berliner Tageblatt* to declare that the Reich was experiencing a 'sudden swing to the Left'.[61] Indeed, much of the reportage was framed around how well these elections served as a predictor for new Reichstag elections that were expected imminently.[62] It is worth noting that both Hesse and Bremen had been SPD strongholds throughout the Weimar Republic, so the results in those elections are less surprising than the Volkstag election in Danzig. It is nonetheless still striking that despite its detached and increasingly specific political culture, Danzig conformed to wider Reich electoral trends. Perhaps this speaks as much to the stabilised economic and international contexts in the years up to 1929 as to the ongoing 'Germanness' of the Free City.

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[58] Clark, 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig', pp. 296-299, 312-315.
[59] Ibid, pp. 296-297.
[60] Ibid, pp. 298-299: The archives of *Baltische Presse* remain undigitised and there is still work to be done on this intriguing publication and how it mediated a pro-Warsaw editorial line for a German-speaking Free City audience.
[61] 'Der Ruck nach Links', *Vossische Zeitung,* 14 November 1927, p. 1; Ernest Feder, 'Der Ruck nach Links', *Berliner Tageblatt,* 14 November 1927, p. 1.
[62] The *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* even called the elections of the 13 November 'the beginning of the [Reichstag] election campaign': 'Beginn des Wahlkampfes', *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung,* 14. November 1927, p. 1.

In the 1927 Volkstag election the national question did not manifest as an attempt to move the Free City away from the wider *Deutschtum* and potential reincorporation into the Reich but played out through '*Verständigungspolitik*' and the competing visions of the Free City's future it offered: the SPD argued that a constructive relationship with Poland would bring Danzig greater prosperity whereas the DNVP position believed that *Verständigungspolitik* too readily endorsed the Free City status-quo and undermined the potential for German nationalist-led border revision. That being said, all of the major parties emphasised the essential 'German character' of the Free City, with the SPD even attempting to outflank the DNVP on this issue with party outriders in the press accusing it of presiding over 'Polonisation' in the city through its quite striking accusation that the DNVP-led Senate had let Polish seasonal workers work at the port while unemployed German agrarian workers had been forced to emigrate.[63] With reincorporation not in question and the economy of the Free City stabilising, the SPD victory suggests that a more 'normal', material politics could play out, one which was not solely defined by the issue of the Free City's German national status. Most Danzigers and the Danzig political parties would welcome reincorporation into the Reich but despite intimations of 'treaty revision' coming out of the German Foreign Office this remained a far-off prospect. More immediate issues faced the electorate in this election and the Free City's political institutions, if not entirely desired, at least had the confidence of German Danzigers to act in their national interest. The adoption of a conciliatory *'Verständigungspolitik'* instead seemed to prove that there was an alternative path for the Free City away from an entrenched stalemate with Poland. The 1927 election makes it hard to argue that an irredentist nationalism defined Free City politics as it did among other detached German communities, as in eastern Upper Silesia.

After the Volkstag elections, the SPD formed a 'Weimar coalition' alongside the German Liberals and the Centre Party which was confirmed when a new Senate was elected in January 1928. The price of the Centre Party's entry into government was that Heinrich Sahm, the career civil servant and former Danzig mayor, remained Senate President as it was believed he

[63] 'Danzig am Scheideweg', p. 2.

would act as a brake on the radicalism of the Social Democrats.[64] While Sahm had his own German nationalist tendencies, hence his long period in office with the DNVP, his longevity in the role can also be explained by his adept understanding of the non-partisan role as a professional senator. He had spoken in favour of *Verständigungspolitik* when it was first mooted during the SPD's brief spell in office in 1925-1926,[65] before rhetorically pivoting back to the 'protection of the independence, freedom and German character' of the Free City when the DNVP once again resumed leadership of the Senate.[66] His deference to whichever party controlled the Senate meant that he could be trusted by the SPD and his continuation in office was no threat to *Verständigungspolitik*'s implementation. Indeed, Sahm noted in his diary that he was 'convinced' he could work with any coalition he had to 'as everyone will and must come together in the German spirit'.[67]

The first victories for *Verständigungspolitik* were a visit from Polish foreign minister August Zaleski and an agreement between the Senate and Poland over harbour administration and railway tariffs. This agreement was not without controversy, however, as the Senate was accused of betraying Danzig's German community: a Reich newspaper, the *Ostpreußische Zeitung,* called the agreement 'a betrayal of the fatherland' and 'a great dirty trick perpetuated by Poland'.[68] Such emotive language over a relatively modest agreement indicates the strength of feeling in some German nationalists, including those not even resident in Danzig, over perceived violations of Free City sovereignty. To them better relations with Poland were not only an admission of defeat and an acceptance of the legitimacy of Danzig's separation but a covert way for Poland to extend its 'web over Danzig'.[69] This conspiracist thinking extended to simple symbolic gestures, as well: on 10 November 1929 to commemorate ten years of Polish independence, Polish trains arriving in the Free City were festooned with red and white Polish flags, a gesture perceived in alarmist nationalist tracts as Poland 'claiming' the Free

[64] Sprenger, p. 173.
[65] Quoted in: Sprenger, pp. 140-141.
[66] Quoted in: Sprenger, p. 156.
[67] Quoted in: Sprenger, p. 196.
[68] Peter Oliver Loew, *Danzig. Biographie einer Stadt* (Munich: CH Beck, 2011), p. 194.
[69] Joachim Nehring, *Polnische Netze über Danzig* (Berlin: Verlag Adolf Albrecht/Ortsgruppe Berlin des Alldeutschen Verbandes, 1929).

City.[70] Such examples should not necessarily suggest that these anti-*Verständigungspolitik* viewpoints commanded great swathes of public support. Indeed, it is probably fairly instructive that this alarmism came from German nationalists *outside* the Free City, supported by groups like the Deutscher Ostmarkenverein (German Society for the Eastern Marches) and the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German League).[71] *Verständigungspolitik*, however did not fundamentally fully challenge revisionism within the Free City but sought to supplant it and for a time it was successful in this endeavour.

The high point of *Verständigungspolitik* was the state visit by Polish prime minister Kazimierz Bartel at the end of February 1929. The visit was greeted with great expectant fanfare in the pages of the *Volksstimme*. Given that it was the Danzig SPD's signature policy, favourable coverage in the party newspaper is hardly surprising. What makes the coverage noteworthy is the way it seeks to both evoke the German nationalist reading of Danzig's medieval past while simultaneously subverting it and making it congruent with the Senate's new foreign policy aims. A front-page *Volksstimme* editorial titled 'For *Verständigungspolitik*!' published shortly before the visit, situates the state visit within historical continuity, remarking that in the Middle Ages Danzig would regularly receive the Polish King, whose presence was celebrated with a festival lasting days.[72] Despite this loyalty to and fruitful collaboration with Poland, however, 'Danzig knew to protect its republican independence and German culture'.[73] With the imminent visit of Bartel this tradition had thus been resumed. By 'resuming' this historical tradition, according to the *Volksstimme*, it is really the SPD which is restoring Danzig's medieval glory by reorientating the Free City economically towards Poland while maintaining the city's German culture. As previously noted, the Hanseatic medieval past held symbolic power in the Free City's collective memory and so there is an underlying logic to the SPD's engagement in nationalist mythmaking for the purposes of legitimation. The editorial proceeds to reemphasise its claim that it is really the SPD, not the

[70] Ibid.
[71] For more on the origins of these groups and how they related to the German nationalist imaginary, see: Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp.116-118.
[72] 'Für die Verständigungspolitik! Zum polnischen Ministerbesuch in Danzig', *DVS*, 26 February 1929, p. 1.
[73] Ibid.

DNVP, who are the party of business: *Verständigungspolitik* had, the paper argued, 'fulfilled the dream of restoring the old Hanseatic glory'. This initially seems curious as although the party had broadened its electoral appeal in 1927, its base was still very much located in the Free City's working class, particularly its dockworkers. This coverage thus makes more sense if it is read as the SPD championing the city's economy, with the jobs and stable employment that such prosperity brings, rather than bourgeois interests *per se*.

The speeches from the state banquet go some way to demonstrate what a symbolic victory Bartel's visit was for the Free City and *Verständigungspolitik*. So key were they to the public relations coup of the state visit that they were reproduced on the front pages of the *Volksstimme* and the *Danziger Zeitung*.[74] The former declared 'The will for understanding [*Verständigungswille*] has been affirmed'. Although the visit very much represented the high point for the new relations, there is a strong sense from the speeches that both parties believed there was still more work to be done on this front. 'It pleases me to be able to say that the rapprochement has lately made considerable progress and adopted a new quicker pace,' noted Sahm who then argued that the Free City 'has recognised the important role it plays in the Polish economy and it is ready to fulfil this task'. He qualifies this, saying that the 'free development and full functioning' of Danzig's economic potential is only possible when 'its individual nature and specific interests are taken into account': *Verständigungspolitik* was still understood as a policy intended to respect and maintain Danzig's German character. Bartel argued that Poland was 'ready to promote and defend the legitimate interests of the Free City, especially economic interests' and that 'besides the aspiration for close Polish-Danzig economic cooperation' Poland would also 'appreciate the cultural interests of the Free City, including the preservation of its national character.' Sahm ended his speech with 'Long live the Polish Republic!' and Bartel reciprocated with 'The Free City of Danzig - long may it live!' While they were diplomatic pleasantries, such a declaration by Sahm demonstrates the improved relations: such words would have been near unthinkable a few years earlier when it remained a priority for the Free City to defensively assert its sovereignty *against* Poland.

[74] 'Die Verständigungswille wird bekräftigt', *DVS,* 28 February 1929, p.1; 'Danzig-polnischer Meinungsaustausch. Ein Markstein?', *DZ,* 28 February 1929, p. 1.

While these speeches struck a positive note for the future, they both side-stepped important issues threatening the Free City-Poland relationship. Commenting on the speeches, the *Danziger Zeitung* was keen to note that what had not been said as important as what had been.[75] The most consequential of these was the issue of Gdynia/Gdingen. During the early 1920s, with the 1920 Danzig dockers' strike still fresh in Polish minds, plans were put into effect to construct a port at Gdynia, 20 kilometres north of Danzig but within the sovereign Polish territory. In less than a decade, what had been a small fishing village was transformed into a modern port to rival centuries-old Danzig. While it would not overtake Danzig in terms of imports and exports until the early 1930s, Gdynia became a source of deep conflict between Poland and the Free City. In some ways it provoked an existential conflict for the latter as its entire existence and prosperity was linked to its unique nature as *the* port for Poland. This angst is exemplified by Gdynia's constant description as Poland's *'Kriegshafen'* ('naval port') in the German-language press, this military emphasis suggesting the danger it posed to the Free City.

This point was made even more explicit by the East Prussian Heimatverband which in a pamphlet entitled *Danzig In Danger* called Gdynia 'the revolver placed on Danzig's chest'.[76] Poland claimed that the port was only being constructed 'for economic reasons',[77] which was not inaccurate as Poland needed greater port capacity. This had been memorably evidenced when in August 1926 trains transporting Upper Silesian coal had piled up outside the Free City (although, as Clark notes, the port of Danzig's railway connectivity was Poland's responsibility).[78] The economic explanation did not satisfy many Danzigers who feared they would not only lose direct exports but also that companies headquartered in Danzig would move to Gdynia.[79] That Gdynia was not even mentioned during the Polish state visit therefore demonstrates what a sore point it was for Free City-Poland relations and that there was only so much conciliation *Verständigungspolitik* could facilitate. Danzig repeatedly complained about Gdynia to the League Commissioner in the Free City, at this point Dutch diplomat Joost

[75] 'Danzig-polnischer Meinungsaustausch. Ein Markstein?', p. 1.
[76] Sprenger, p. 195.
[77] Ibid, p. 194.
[78] Clark 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig', p. 210.
[79] Ibid, p. 335.

van Hamel, and then to the League directly. Herbert Sprenger identifies the escalation in this conflict at the end of 1929 as the 'end point of *Verständigungspolitik'*[80]. This, however, implies a neat cut-off point for the policy when the process was actually more drawn out.

Another event in 1929 would also suggest the limits of *Verständigungspolitik*: the commemorations for the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June. Although the date had seldom been marked officially before in the Free City, it took on a new meaning for in 1929 as a focal point for dissatisfaction with Danzig's continued detachment from the Reich. The Social Democrats' enthusiasm for most of the commemorations, only five months after the Polish state visit, suggests that despite the relative success of *Verständigungspolitik*, the national question still dominated in the Free City. At a sitting of the Volkstag the day before the tenth anniversary itself, all the German parties apart from the Communists signed a special motion declaring 28 June a '*Volkstrauertag*' ('people's day of mourning'). In the Weimar Republic this had been the name applied to the semi-official day of remembrance for the war dead which took place on the second Sunday in Lent. It was not a public holiday, however, and was not officially marked in Danzig. The use of this language for the anniversary of the signing of the Versailles Treaty, *not* the end of the First World War is quite intentional. Although the motion initially refers to the war dead, the rest makes clear that the 'mourning' is as much for Danzig's place in the Reich as for those killed in the First World War:

> the peace treaty separated the nearly entirely German population of the Free City from the German Empire against their expressed will. This gave us difficult psychological and economic burdens to bear […] We wish to make it clear with all resolve and conviction that the now ten-year separation has in no way been able to damage the inner and cultural togetherness between Danzig's population and the German people.[81]

This '*Volkstrauertag*' was intended to reiterate the treaty as a site of grievance: that its imposition was still perceived as illegitimate and despite ten years in which to embed itself,

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[80] Sprenger, p. 202.
[81] *Verhandlungen des Volkstags der Freien Stadt Danzig. 3. Wahlperiode 1928/30,* vol. 13 (Danzig: Volkstag Danzig, 1930), p. 1915.

the Free City was still seen as an unwanted, artificial construct. This resolution complicates the idea that *Verständigungspolitik* had sought to *avoid* nationalism, instead suggesting the policy was instead a manifestation of pragmatic nationalism. This is because the Social Democrats, its architects, had endorsed the resolution which had been equally endorsed by their nemeses on the nationalist right/far-right in the DNVP, DSP and NSDAP. In the *Volksstimme,* the Social Democrats decried the 'nationalist subversion' of the solemn day of remembrance, even condemning protestors calling for '*Heim ins Reich*'[82] ('Home to the Reich', prefiguring the *völkisch* Nazi policy encouraging German minority communities across Eastern Europe to 'return' to Germany). It strikes as implausible to endorse a nationalist analysis referring to the Free City's 'psychological burdens' but fall short of endorsing the implication of this analysis: the reunion of Danzig and the Reich. Perhaps it rather reflects an opportunistic exploitation of nationalist feeling in the Free City at a collective moment of reflection. The Social Democrats seemed stuck between their desire to reap the material benefits of better relations with Poland and their aversion to over-committing themselves to the Free City status-quo which, even if it retained Danzigers' confidence, was never particularly liked. It is this 'functional' or 'pragmatic' German nationalism which characterised the Social Democrats' approach to governing the Free City in contrast to the committed 'ideological nationalism' of the German Nationals, which differed in tone to the former particularly through its publicly-stated irredentist desires for border revision.

Warsaw did not take kindly to the commemorations or to the Senate's resolution which they perceived as having irredentist, anti-Polish overtones. The Polish Commissioner General, Henryk Leon Strasburger, warned the Senate to uphold its obligations under the Treaty, underlining that 'any similar expressions directed towards Poland are harmful to the economic interests of both Poland and Danzig' because of their disruption to the good relations which had developed as a result of *Verständigungspolitik*:[83] if appeals for respect could not be made on a diplomatic basis, there was always the economic argument. The Senate hit back saying that the commemorations were events of mourning, but in no way contravened treaties between the Free City and Poland; either way 'the population of the Free City of

[82] 'Danzig gedenkt des Tages von Versailles' *DVS*, 28 June 1929, p. 1.
[83] 'Polnischer Schritt beim Senat', *DZ*, 29 June 1929, p. 1.

Danzig have the right to freedom of speech as recognised by the League-guaranteed constitution'.[84] The resumption of such diplomatic spats playing out in the press indicates that the *Verständigungspolitik* settlement was beginning to fray. Indeed, this view is supported by the simple fact that these quite enthusiastically German nationalist, if not *outright* revisionist, commemorations of the Treaty, could not only occur but command support from the SPD and DNVP alike. This speaks to a deeper limitation of *Verständigungspolitik*: that it provided no roadmap for what would come after reconciliation and that a certain degree of momentum was necessary to withstand a future regression to nationalist-fuelled tit-for-tat antipathy, particularly when issues such as Gdynia were still unresolved.

One of the key factors underpinning *Verständigungspolitik* was the unprecedentedly favourable economic context in the years preceding 1929-30. This was to change dramatically with the onset of financial crisis in September 1929. Danzig, with its export-driven port economy, was acutely exposed. During 1929-30 customs revenues decreased from 19.1 million gulden to 12.5 million, seventy Danzig firms gone bankrupt and by December 1930 unemployment reached 25,000.[85] In early 1930 the economic crisis spilled out into political crisis with Danzig's 'Weimar coalition' collapsing after the SPD resigned from the Senate. A shaky DNVP-led coalition then collapsed only two days after being elected to the Senate. The SPD re-entered government until elections could be held on 16 November 1930. Held under such difficult economic circumstances, these elections confirmed the Danzig Nazis as *the* new insurgent political force in the Free City. After receiving just one seat in 1927, the party leapt into second place with twelve seats in the new reduced seventy-two seat Volkstag. Though the SPD retained nineteen seats, it lost 12,000 votes since 1927. A defeated-sounding *Volksstimme* headline declared 'It happened as in Germany: Voters seduced by lies and smears',[86] referring to the Reichstag elections held two months earlier where the Nazis had made similar gains. Both the Free City and Germany were hit hard by the global economic collapse which further engendered political instability as parties found it harder to make compromises in government. The Danzig SPD, despite its relative electoral strength, was

[84] 'Danzigs Antwort an Polen', *DVS*, 1 July 1929, p. 1.
[85] Kimmich, p. 106.
[86] 'Es kam wie ähnlich in Deutschland', *DVS*, 17 November 1930, p. 1.

losing votes to its left and to its right, seemingly helpless against a Nazi party which declared itself as Danzig's 'saviour against the Poles'.[87] The new Volkstag was even more fragmented politically than it had ever been before and so even if the economic situation had not been so difficult, the electoral arithmetic suggested that *Verständigungspolitik*, or what was left of it, could not be recovered and what was to replace it was still yet to be determined. By 1930 national identity was at its most resonant in the ten-year history of the Free City. Danzig's new civic identity, however, relied upon and so could not substitute, the older German national identity. With the far-right in power there was little sign of this changing. The Free City at least had some political autonomy whereas Kattowitz was fully incorporated into Poland, bringing the minorities question to the forefront of Kattowitzers' minds.

[87] 'Danziger Satyrspiel', *Vorwärts*, 30 December 1930, p. 1.

Chapter 3: Kattowitz, 1919-1930

Upper Silesia was another point of contention at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Like Danzig, the Commission on Polish Affairs at first awarded the entirety of the region to Poland. This was more because it believed the demographic split favoured Polish speakers than because of historical precedent. The region, which was split between German speakers and speakers of Polish or Silesian, a Slavic language closely related to Polish but with influences from German, had been a part of the proto-Polish medieval Piast kingdoms but was then a Habsburg and then Prussian territory and not a part of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Pro-Polish and Silesian regionalist politics began to develop particularly during Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s which targeted Poles as much as German Catholics, enforcing German as the only language of school instruction for example.[88] At this time Eastern Upper Silesia was growing into a sprawling industrial agglomeration which by 1918 produced a quarter of Germany's coal, 81% of its zinc and 34% of its lead.[89] Kattowitz was at the centre of this new *Industriebezirk* and had only received city-status in 1865. Before the discovery of large reserves of coal in the area and development of heavy industry by local Prussian landowners, Kattowitz had just been a small village and railway halt on the Silesian railway from Breslau/Wrocław to Myslowitz/Myslowice.

As with Danzig, it was David Lloyd George who objected to the incorporation of Upper Silesia by Poland. It appears though, that he was more concerned with the ability of Germany to pay the proposed war reparations than with arguments over self-determination, although the latter proved rhetorically useful in discussions with Wilson.[90] The economic argument would arise again during the partition debate, but for now Lloyd George secured agreement with Georges Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson that the region should be put to a plebiscite. To avoid a bias in favour of Germany, the plebiscite would be organised by the Allies locally and the plebiscite area would contain all of the Prussian *Regierungsbezirk* Oppeln except some of its westernmost German-speaking areas.[91]

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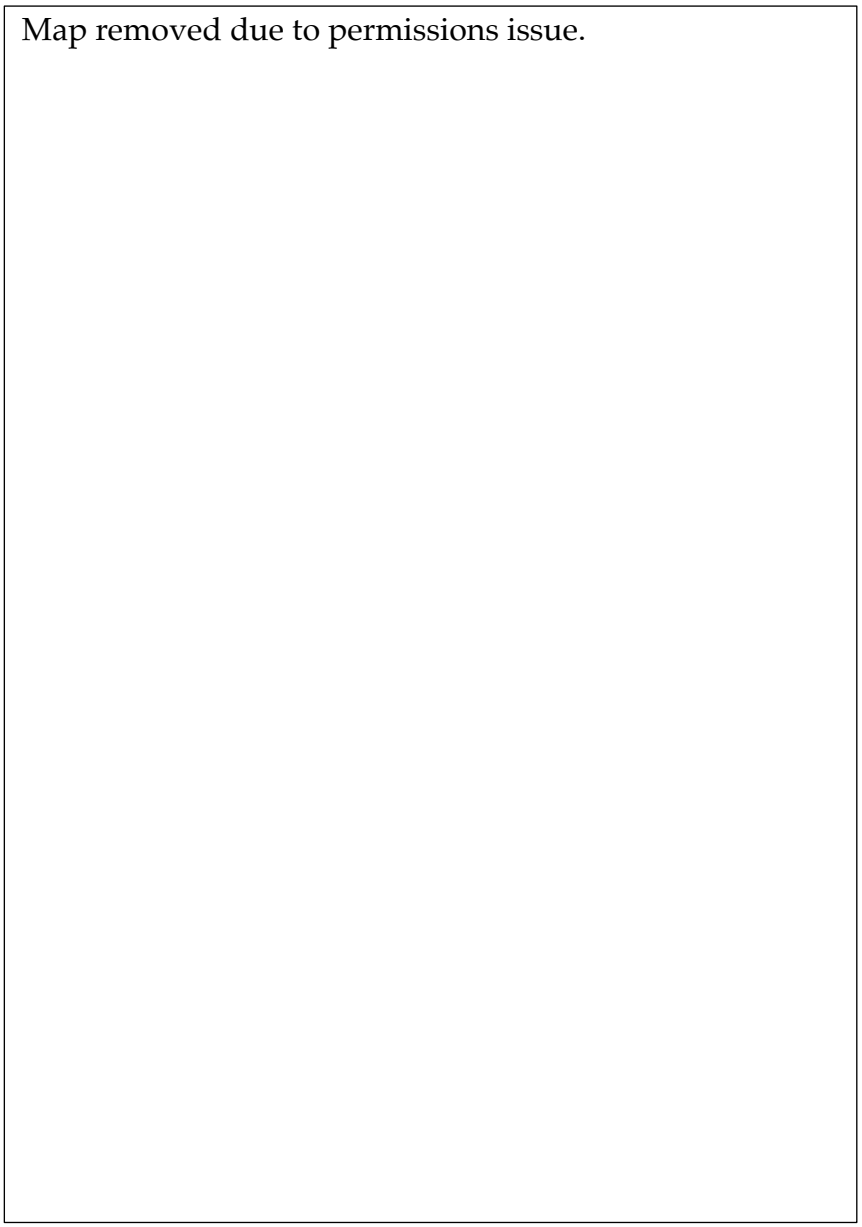
[88] For more on Upper Silesia during the *Kulturkampf*, see Bjork, pp. 20-43; Karch, pp. 45-57.
[89] MacMillan, p. 229.
[90] Ibid, pp. 229-230.
[91] Smith, p. 144.



Map 3.1 – Kattowitz and Upper Silesia in the German Empire, 1871-1918

Source: Karch, p. 25.

3.1: The Silesian Uprisings, Plebiscite and Partition

Upper Silesia experienced significant political tumult in the years following the end of the First World War. It experienced a period of nationalist violence and three 'Uprisings', two of which resembled small-scale civil wars, a national plebiscite and ultimately partition. As we shall see, partition did not end the national conflict. This section, however, is concerned with how the decades-old national fault-lines in this contested borderland space were so violently

ignited as the new European post-war order was being formed. Despite its location at the Prussian periphery, Upper Silesia was far from isolated from this process. Events were often shaped by the political machinations occurring to its west in Paris and Geneva and the often-violent reconstitution of an independent Poland to its east. Before exploring the plebiscite and partition, this section examines the role of the popular press in the Second Uprising in particular and how it shaped narratives about a conflict which was a violent watershed for Polish-German relations in Upper Silesia and a conflict which remains contested today.

The First Silesian Uprising in August 1919 emerged from the contested immediate post-war environment where the terms of the peace were being negotiated in Paris but on the ground, national territory was all to play for. It broke out after German *Grenzschutz* paramilitaries shot ten protesting Polish miners at the mine in Myslowitz, near Kattowitz, leading to a general strike by Polish workers. This agitation soon descended into rioting in Kattowitz and other cities in the *Industriebezirk* but was quickly pacified by 21,000 demobilising German troops. While not as large in scale as the latter two uprisings, it was nonetheless a significant portent of violence to come. It also confirmed the Allies' decision to occupy the plebiscite area once the Treaty of Versailles came into force. This took place on 15 January 1920 when the Inter-Allied Commission took over administration of much of Upper Silesia from the old provincial capital of Oppeln/Opole. Becoming a temporary quasi-state, the Commission issued its own passports and stamps while ostensibly aiming to create a 'neutral' environment ahead of the plebiscite. This did not happen, however, and the mobilisation of Allied troops in the region failed to stem the descent into nationalist violence which had begun to punctuate everyday life in the polarised Upper Silesia.[92] The mobilisation primarily of French troops, under General Henri Le Rond, was ineffective and, at times, even exacerbated the situation due to the troops' perceived partiality in favour of Poland[93]

The summer of 1920 marked the first period of major crisis for the new international settlement. Most critical to East Central Europe was the climax of the Polish-Soviet war.

[92] For more on the scale and normalisation of nationalist violence in the plebiscite area, see: Timothy Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).
[93] Karch, pp. 122-124.

Raging since early 1919, it had assumed a new ideological purpose for the Soviets who foresaw the defeat of Poland as providing an opportunity to expand the Soviet experiment westward to Germany. By August 1920, it appeared unclear whether Poland could withstand the Soviet assault that was drawing closer to Warsaw, imbuing the conflict with apocalyptic overtones for Poland. The idea that the post-war order was already beginning to disintegrate was gaining traction by August 1920 and is echoed by a cover of *Simplicissimus* published two days before the outbreak of the Second Uprising (Fig 3.1). Titled 'Discussions Continue', a stark red illustration depicts Lloyd-George and French prime minister Alexandre Millerand carrying a table through an intense fiery graveyard landscape as their aides carry chairs and reams of documents. The subtitle reads 'The world burns! To the fire-fighting conference!', witheringly suggesting that the *status quo ante* approach of endless Great Power conferences may be inadequate in resolving with the new tensions created by the post-war settlement across the continent.

The Second Silesian Uprising took place in the middle of this context. On Friday 20 August 1920 the *Oberschlesischer Wanderer* falsely reported that Warsaw had fallen to the Soviet forces surrounding it.[94] With Poland seemingly defeated, jingoistic celebrations by German nationalists in Kattowitz descended into rioting where a Polish nationalist was lynched.[95] Soon after Polish nationalists took up arms and occupied much of Upper Silesia. The Inter-Allied forces were slow to put down the violence although the *Wanderer's* publication was banned for seven days. The Polish nationalist but German-language *Oberschlesische Grenz-Zeitung*, owned by the influential Polish nationalist leader and plebiscite commissioner Wojciech Korfanty, initially reported 'a German attack on Upper Silesia' on Saturday 21 August.[96] The next day, the events had transformed beyond a simple outbreak of violence into 'the Polish population's battle for the peace treaty'.[97] While the change in tone does reflect a rapidly developing conflict, it also shows how the fluid situation was exploited for nationalist ends. The essential meaning of the complex conflict was transmutable and the press mobilised to further their own nationalist standpoint.

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[94] *Oberschlesischer Wanderer* (*OW*), 20 August 1920, p. 1.
[95] Bjork, p. 217.
[96] *Oberschlesische Grenz-Zeitung* (*OGZ*), 21 August 1920, p. 1.
[97] *OGZ*, 22 August 1920 (Special Edition), p. 1.

Figure 3.1 – 'Discussions continue': *Simplicissimus* cartoon

Simplicissimus, 18 August 1920, p. 1.

Soon after fighting broke out Polish nationalists began a general strike. Their list of demands was featured on the front cover of the Sunday 21 August edition of the *Grenz-Zeitung*. They included justice for victims of German nationalist violence through the 'arrest and sentencing of all arsonists, murderers, looters' and the dismissal of public officials involved in the 'German agitation'. The demands also sought to address perceived inequities in the balance of power in Upper Silesia and called for the dissolution of the *Sicherheitswehr*. A vestige of Prussian administration, this was the militarised security force in Upper Silesia, viewed as institutionally prejudiced against Polish speakers. The Polish workers also called for repatriation of those who had moved to Upper Silesia in the past two years, who would

otherwise be granted a vote in the plebiscite. They felt that this wrongly enfranchised German speakers who had moved to the *Industriebezirk* while no provision had been made to enfranchise Polish-speaking Upper Silesians who had emigrated, mostly to Germany. This demand signals how the plebiscite focused nationalists' attentions, even before it had formally been called (requests during the uprising to indefinitely postpone the plebiscite were ignored).[98] Each side would do what it could to secure Upper Silesia's future for themselves, whether through formal negotiation, violence and uprisings (as had already successfully happened in Prussian Posen) – or a general strike which threatened to bring one of Europe's most productive coalfields to a standstill.

The *Volkswille*, published by the Upper Silesian SPD, took a conciliatory tone towards nationalist agitation, with a headline on Sunday 22 August describing 'difficult times' in Upper Silesia. The nationalist agitation it refers to is exclusively Polish and so it is not as neutral as it positions itself to be. Indeed, in a joint address from the SPD, the USPD and the Free Trades Unions, the areas where the uprising was taking place were described as 'areas […] which until now have happily been peaceful'.[99] This view, while naive and inaccurate, is indicative of German perceptions of the scale of the violence as a new phenomenon. Timothy Wilson has argued that the Second and Third Uprisings were not isolated spontaneous outbursts of mass-violence but bloody nadirs in an extended period of nationalist violence that destabilised Upper Silesia until after partition in 1922.[100] While the scale and later militarisation of violence during the uprisings was exceptional, the violence itself was not. While the nationalist violence did not then necessarily come from nowhere, it is also worth considering that for many German-speakers the events of August 1920 did at least represent a watershed, provoking an existential crisis for German nationalists in Upper Silesia.

This was largely because, although the nationalist conflict stretched back several decades to the nineteenth century, German speakers in Upper Silesia believed that they would always be shielded from the perceived threat of the Poles by being a part of the Reich, *the* German

[98] 'Die Volksabstimmung bleibt unberührt', *Volkswille* (*VW*), 24 August 1920, p. 3.
[99] 'Gewerkschaftler, Genossen, Hand- und Kopfarbeiter Oberschlesiens!', *VW*, 22 August 1922, p. 1.
[100] Wilson.

national state. However, two factors — the establishment of the Inter-Allied Commission and the unprecedented scale of violence in the territory during the Second Uprising — forced German speakers to acknowledge that Upper Silesia could soon be permanently detached from the rest of the Reich. At this moment, however, there was not the equivalent call to arms in the German-language press. The *Volkswille* called on its readers to 'be as firmly united as a man, peaceful and level-headed'.[101] The masculine emphasis here seeks to invoke a stereotype of clear-headedness while reproducing the narrative that Germans were fundamentally more civilised and calmer than the supposedly atavistically irrational Poles. These stereotypes developed over the nineteenth century, in part to justify German hegemony in Prussian Poland and became crystallised through concepts of 'German work' and 'German culture'.[102] It is not surprising that these bigoted stereotypes were still prevalent, but it does demonstrate how the national conflict had shifted from this pre-war German hegemony and Polish speakers were making their voices heard in a louder than before.

After months of unrest, the Inter-Allied Commission announced in late 1920 that the plebiscite on Upper Silesia's national future would be held on 20 March 1921. With more than 1.2 million voters taking part, the Upper Silesian plebiscite would be the largest post-war plebiscite. While Upper Silesia was one of the territories empowered after 1918 to actively decide its own sovereignty, the vote was more than a confirmation of the pre-existing national divide. Indeed, recent scholarship has emphasised that, in this nationally ambiguous and fiercely disputed territory, material concerns could and did dictate national loyalty at the ballot box.[103] This was particularly the case in the German-speaking enclaves of the *Industriebezirk* which had fewer ties to Upper Silesia's distinct history and greater interest in preserving its place as a productive industrial heartland, second only to the Ruhr in Germany.

Both plebiscite campaigns used posters, postcards and their affiliated newspapers to get their messages across while also seeking to appeal to the more nationally indifferent. As Brendan

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[101] *VW*, 22 August 1922, p. 1.
[102] For a thorough exploration of the development of the concept of 'German work' and how it fitted into Germany's nineteenth century imperial ambitions, see: Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany*, trans. by Sorcha O'Hagan (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), pp. 334-379.
[103] Ibid, pp. 127-147; Bjork, pp. 214-266; Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919-1989* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), pp. 30-32.

Karch has noted, the German campaign used many different rhetorical lines of attack to encourage Upper Silesians to vote for Germany, from highlighting Poland's involvement in six wars after independence and the fact it still had conscription to broader appeals that relied on the emotional resonance in the German concept of *Heimat*.[104] The *Industriebezirk*'s representation in the campaign is an under-explored topic, however. One poster from the German campaign featured a towering crucifix superimposed in front of an industrial landscape typical of the *Industriebezirk* and read: 'The Heimat's prayer: Upper Silesia stay German!' (Fig. 3.2).

This stark and emotive poster relies on religious iconography and language to appeal to the shared Catholic faith which transcended the Upper Silesian linguistic divide. It also creates both rational and emotive arguments to appeal to Upper Silesians: remaining in Germany makes sense from an economic perspective, hence the industrial background, while it is also the *duty* of Upper Silesians to defend the *Heimat*. The industrial landscape subverts traditional depictions of *Heimat* which usually consist of essentially premodern rural imagery. Instead, with its smoke-belching chimneys and towering mineshafts, the poster is rooted firmly in the *Industriebezirk*, its core audience tied to heavy industry. Such an appeal also has more transparent motives as much of the German plebiscite campaign was funded by the Prussian industrialists with a strong financial stake in the plebiscite's outcome.[105]

[104] Karch, pp. 132-134: '*Heimat*' very roughly translates to 'homeland' but this fails to capture the strong emotional resonance it holds within German-speaking culture. Generally, it relies upon localised or regional imagery as a prism through which broader ideas of the nation are refracted. In German historiography it has come to be used as a framework to explore the development of German nationalism and national identity during the nineteenth century and how it can be explained through historic regional identities, see: Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) and Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[105] Karch, p. 128.

Figure 3.2 – 'The Heimat's prayer' German plebiscite campaign poster

Source: Silesian Digital Library

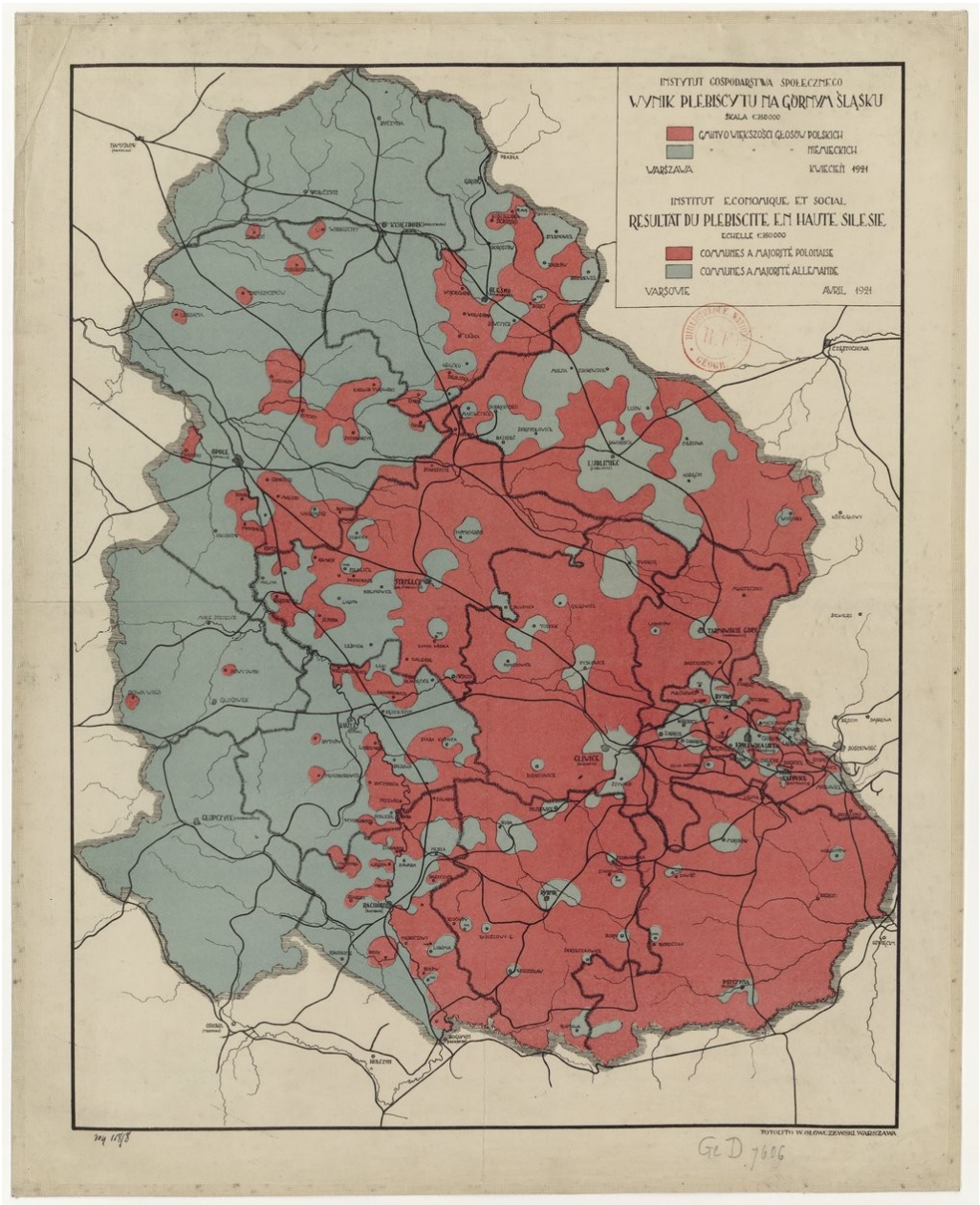
An American journalist noted that although 'nearly every village requested the Allies to grant them a division of troops the day on the plebiscite', the day itself 'passed off with a calm and correctness which might well be copied in elections anywhere.'[106] In Kattowitz, French troops were a visible presence, keeping order at polling stations and even patrolling through the city in tanks (Fig. 3.2).

[106] Sanford Griffith, 'An Onlooker in Upper Silesia', *North American Review* 214.788 (1921) pp. 1-12 (pp. 1-4).

Figure 3.3 – A French tank patrolling the centre of Kattowitz on Plebiscite Day, 1921
Source: Gallica Digital Library, BnF

After the votes were counted, the overall result was 59.6% to Germany and 40.4% to Poland.[107] This result was much higher in the cities of the *Industriebezirk* with Kattowitz registering 85% support for Germany.[108] While there was a strong urban-rural divide in the results, with urban centres favouring Germany, there was also a strong geographical disparity where rural western Upper Silesia was generally more pro-German while rural eastern Upper Silesia was strongly pro-Polish. The porous borders that existed between German and Polish-voting areas are well exemplified in map form (Map 3.2).

[107] Quoted in: Smith, p. 154.
[108] *Rocznik statystyki Rzczypospolitej Polskiej 1920/22*, vol. 2 (Warsaw: Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 1923), p. 358.



Map 3.2 – The results of the Upper Silesian Plebiscite by geographical area

Source: Gallica Digital Library, BnF

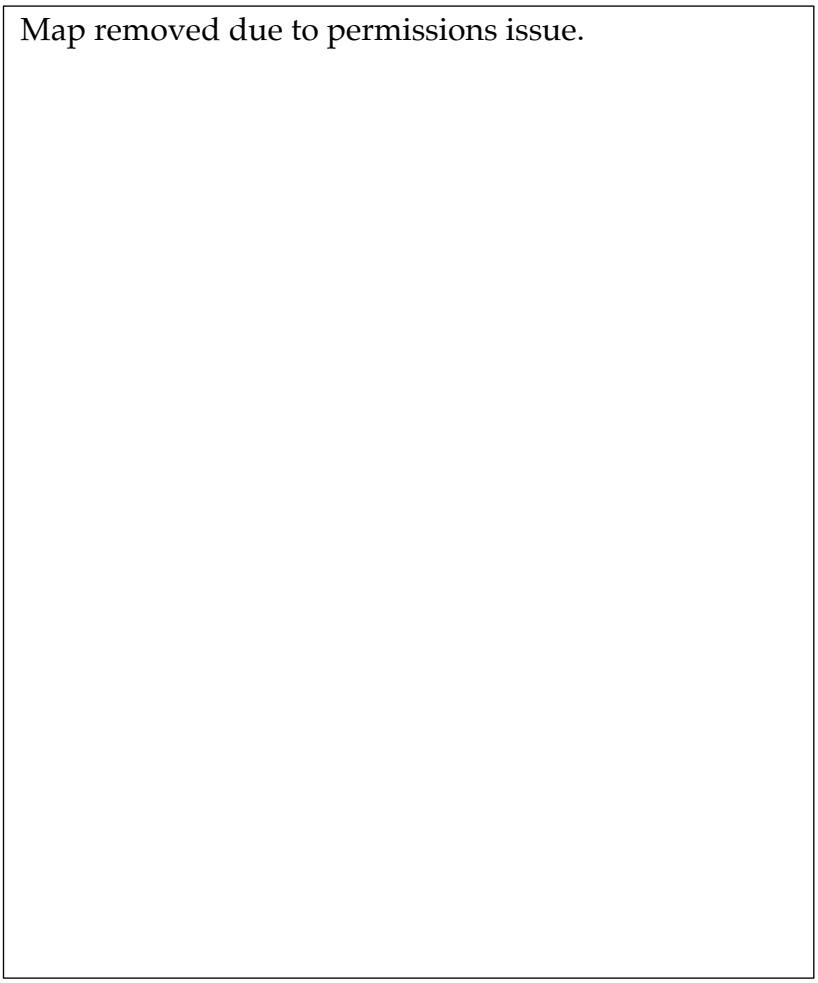
Despite a majority of Upper Silesians voting to remain in Germany, the results' lack of clarity led to both sides claiming victory. The *Kattowitzer Zeitung* celebrated the Germans' majority of 250,000 votes, emphasising an 'overwhelming victory' in the cities of the *Industriebezirk*.[109] In contrast, the *Grenz-Zeitung* declared 'We won!' and called it 'Freedom Day'.[110] The Polish

[109] *KZ*, 21 March 1921, p. 1.
[110] 'Wie haben gesiegt!', *OGZ*, 21 March 1921, p. 1.

nationalists attempted to justify this by highlighting Polish majorities in rural eastern Upper Silesia. The contested results did little to resolve the Upper Silesian question and after Allied plans to cede the entire plebiscite area to Germany were leaked, the Third Silesian Uprising broke out on the night before Poland's Constitution Day, 3 May 1921. The Third Uprising was the most militarised and lethal of the three, with estimates suggesting it left as many a 4000 dead.[111] Unlike the first two Silesian Uprisings and much of the nationalist violence since, there was greater central co-ordination in the Third Uprising: many Polish troops crossed over the border from Poland, while pro-German forces were largely made up of *Freikorps* units, often from elsewhere in the Reich. If the plebiscite had made Upper Silesia a rhetorical battleground between Germany and Poland, then the Third Uprising made it a literal one. This time, much of the Uprising took place outside the *Industriebezirk* and was more centred around the more pro-German west of the territory. It raged for close to three months before Inter-Allied troops decisively intervened to bring it to an end. Such a violent turn of events demonstrated that no solution to the Upper Silesian question would be easy – nor would both sides be satisfied.

On 20 October 1920 the League announced that Upper Silesia was to be partitioned. The decision and its exact geographical ramifications, too contested to be made between the Allies, was passed on to a committee of representatives from 'neutral' states.[112] It awarded Germany 71% of Upper Silesia's territory and 53% of its population but awarded Poland much of eastern Upper Silesia, including most of the *Industriebezirk* and the city of Kattowitz, which had firmly voted against incorporation into Poland (Map 3.3).

[111] Karch, p. 142.
[112] Tooze, p. 282.



Map 3.3 – The Partition of Upper Silesia
Source: Karch, p. 145.

Partition exposed the limits of self-determination during the foundation of the new international order. As in the case of Danzig, ideas of self-determination were subordinated to economic arguments. Here the inherent contradiction in the post-war application of self-determination is exposed: when the principle came into conflict with Allied-led attempts to build a new post-war order, the latter took precedence. While in Upper Silesia there was the need to balance German and Polish claims to self-determination, the decision to award Poland most of the *Industriebezirk* and its industrial German capital Kattowitz suggested Polish economic concerns took precedence over arguments of self-determination. Aware of this or not, even before the plebiscite Polish politicians seemed to change tack and emphasise economic arguments over self-determination. In his English-language pamphlet *The Truth About Upper Silesia*, Polish politician Andrzej Wierzbicki argued that

> the one principle of nationality is not enough to defend Upper Silesia. Above it there rises […] more and more powerfully, the second factor in the problem, the economic factor, and it is becoming so overwhelming […] as to make it quite certain that it will finally decide the whole question.[113]

Here Wierzbicki appears to pre-emptively downplay the role of self-determination in Upper Silesia's future, probably to still substantiate Poland's claim should the plebiscite appear to favour Germany. He argues that Upper Silesia is vital for the basic economic viability of Poland, that it will develop the region better could and that German irredentism will be emboldened if Germany were to receive Upper Silesia threatening the European peace.[114] This first claim represented the view held increasingly more broadly in the international community that Poland without Upper Silesia would simply not be an economically viable state, as it was believed would be the case without Polish access to the sea.

While a contested plebiscite and the constant threat of a return of nationalist violence left no easy options for resolving the Upper Silesian question, for all the talk of a 'Wilsonian moment',[115] economic realities were used to entrench this new international order. Nationalist logic was embedded and legally codified through new supranational institutions, of which the League of Nations was the centrepiece. In practice, though, this new system often raised more questions than it answered. The biggest and most complex of these were the new national minorities created after 1918. Despite various attempts to protect them supranationally through instruments like the Minorities treaties and the Upper Silesian Geneva Convention, as this thesis shall explore further, the efficacy of these new institutions often entrenched stalemate between the Polish state and its new Silesian German minority.

The partition of Upper Silesia led to an estimated 330,000 Upper Silesian Germans joining the new Polish state.[116] While the remnants of German Silesia remained a Prussian province, Polish Eastern Upper Silesia formed much of the new Autonomous Silesian Voivodeship

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[113] Andrzej Wierzbicki, *The Truth About Upper Silesia* (Warsaw: Diet of the Polish Republic, 1921), p. 7.
[114] Ibid, pp. 20-21.
[115] Karch, p. 97.
[116] Chu, p. 63.

which was to have its capital in the heart of the *Industriebezirk* in Kattowitz. The contested Polonisation of the city and Eastern Upper Silesia more broadly would define the relationship between the Voivodeship and its new German minority for the rest of the decade.

3.2: From Kattowitz to Katowice

On 20 June 1922, the former plebiscite area of Eastern Upper Silesia was formally incorporated into Poland. The area, along with the former Austrian Teschen Silesia, formed the new Silesian Voivodeship. It was the only Voivodeship in the Polish Second Republic to have its own parliament, the Sejm, and had autonomy in areas such as taxation and education. As we shall see, this did not mean that the region was able to fully realise a Silesian regionalist vision within the Second Republic. Instead, an integralist Polish nationalism sought to more fully incorporate and Polonise the region, particularly aggressively after 1926.

Although Germans represented a majority in both Kattowitz and Königshütte/Chorzów, in the wider Silesian Voivodeship they represented an ever-decreasing minority. Before the First World War, the Centre Party had been dominant in Upper Silesia's rural areas, where the party's deep-rooted Catholicism could appeal to both German and Polish speakers. The *Industriebezirk*, however, had been a stronghold for the Social Democrats, while more nationally-minded Poles voted for the Polish Party which had been a significant force in the German Reichstag from the *Kulturkampf* onward. After partition the politics of the German minority realigned on a national basis. The Centre Party, now the Catholic People's Party (KVP) remained a significant force and was closely linked to the 25,000-member Association of German Catholics in Poland.[117] The KVP formed an electoral bloc with the German Party (DP), a more outwardly German nationalist party and a merger of the local national-conservative and liberal parties. In contrast to this united national front, the German Social Democrats (now DSD) stood for election alongside the Polish Socialists (PPS) but this did not privilege their position as the PPS were a marginal force in the Voivodeship and the Second Republic more broadly.

[117] Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918-1939* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), p. 56.

The German bloc did well in the first elections to the Silesian Sejm in November 1922 winning twelve seats out of forty-eight while the DSD won two seats. In Kattowitz itself, German parties secured 67.1% of all votes,[118] a similar number to the proportion which supported Germany in the plebiscite. This was only a minority of the Silesian Sejm and so their influence was often marginal. As such, cultural organisations became the locus of German nationalist organising in the Voivodeship. The largest of these was the Deutscher Volksbund für Polnisch-Oberschlesien (often just the Volksbund) which had 35,000 members at its peak,[119] and was strongly affiliated to the DP through its leader Otto Ulitz, a provocative DP deputy in the Silesian Sejm. Writing after the Second World War,[120] Ulitz described the objective of the Volksbund as being 'the defence of the constitutional and treaty-guaranteed rights of the minority and the preservation and care of German culture and business.'[121] While this is not entirely inaccurate, it underplays how proactive the Volksbund's organising could be. To carry this out the organisation included various subordinate groups like the German Schools Association and the German Cultural Union, and received funding from the German state, often indirectly through organisations such as the Deutsche Stiftung.[122] The Volksbund particularly saw themselves as the bulwark against an aggressive Polish nationalism which, they claimed, threatened to Polonise Upper Silesia. While they often overstated this threat, Upper Silesia did look increasingly Polish in the years after partition.

Kattowitz, the Silesian Voivodeship's new capital was undergoing radical change as part of a process that Peter Polak-Springer has described as 'giving the Voivodeship a "Polish" face'.[123] Out of what had been a majority German-speaking city and rapidly urbanising centre of the *Industriebezirk*, a new distinctly Polish Silesian city was being built. Polish nationalists sought to remake the old Prussian city into a bastion of Polishness more broadly. This extended first to the administration of the city. In 1922 Alfons Górnik was appointed Kattowitz's first post-

[118] 'Deutscher Wahlsieg in Kattowitz-Stadt', *OK,* 27 November 1922 p. 3.
[119] Blanke, p. 57.
[120] Otto Ulitz was an active Nazi Party member in Upper Silesia during the Second World War, which is unmentioned in his later writing. After the war and Soviet denazification, he became the head of the expellee organisation, the Landsmannschaft der Oberschlesier, in the Federal Republic until his death in 1972.
[121] Otto Ulitz, *Aus der Geschichte Oberschlesiens* (Bonn: Landsmannschaft der Oberschlesier, 1962), p. 48.
[122] For a more expansive account of the *Deutsche Stiftung*, see: Blanke pp. 142-152.
[123] Polak-Springer, p. 95.

partition mayor and was the first Polish Silesian to hold the position. Though he may have supported Poland and local Polish nationalist leader Wojciech Korfanty during the Third Uprising, his German education in Berlin and Breslau indicate his distinctly Silesian heritage. Indeed, it was not his intention to radically Polonise the city and he was dismissed from his position in 1928 for refusing to bar Germans from public service in the city's administration.[124]

Instead, Polonisation was more the intention of the Voivodeship authorities, whose first major step in this direction came in 1924 when they announced plans to expand Kattowitz's municipal boundaries by incorporating ten rural districts surrounding the city, creating 'Greater Katowice'. While the population and city boundaries of Kattowitz had somewhat arbitrarily been capped at 70,000 in 1915, this new urban area of 125,000 would make Kattowitz less German than ever before. Ulitz denounced the plans in the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, arguing that they intentionally sought to alter the proportion of Poles to Germans in the city for political ends and that Kattowitz's 'German character could be forever destroyed by such an extensive incorporation'.[125] This 'German character' was already being eroded as the city became the new Silesian capital, but this new plan would end its status as a German-speaking enclave in Upper Silesia, a highly symbolic milestone in its Polonisation.

The city also became more Polonised on street-level as roads were given new Polish names. A street map of the city centre from just after partition (Map 3.4), reveals that every street now has a slightly more prominent Polish name alongside its pre-existing German name and often the two do not correspond. These new street names could be used to commemorate recent Polish Silesian history such as 'Ulica Plebiscytowa' (Plebiscite street) on what was Heinzelstraße or it could even refer to Polish national history rather than Silesian history: the main shopping boulevard Grundmannstraße was now 'Ulica 3. Maya' (3 May street) after the Polish Constitution Day.[126] Simply by renaming streets, urban topographies became ubiquitous national symbols.

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[124] Tatiana Majcherkiewicz, *An Elite in Transition: An Analysis of the Higher Administration of the Region of Upper Silesia, Poland 1990-1997* (unpublished doctoral thesis, the London School of Economics and Political Science, 2001), p. 74.
[125] Otto Ulitz, 'Groß-Kattowitz', *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 23 August 1924, p. 3.
[126] The Constitution Day refers to 3 May 1791 but by that date Upper Silesia had already been a part of Prussia for fifty years and a Habsburg territory for centuries before that.

Map 3.4 – Map of Kattowitz, c.1922

Source: Polona Digital Archive

These attempts to create Katowice out of Kattowitz also to extended to the city's built environment. To accommodate a large influx of civil servants for the new Voivodeship administration, the urban core of city centre was shifted south of the old Ringstraße into a new purpose-built district. The centrepiece of this was the new Voivodeship Government Building, housing both the Sejm and the Voivodeship administration. A hulking modernist block, albeit with some pre-fascist nods to classical ornamentation, the monumental building was constructed between 1923 and 1929 and was no doubt made yet more imposing by the large square in front of it intended for Polish nationalist 3 May parades.[127] The building became a strong symbol of the Polish state; at its official opening on 5 May 1929, the Silesian Voivode Michał Grażyński called for the building to be a 'border guard for the eternal [Polish] national spirit'.[128] This defensive military language echoes the building's imposing fortress-

[127] For more on these nationalist rallies, see: Polak-Springer, pp. 55-83.

[128] 'Der Staatspräsident in Kattowitz', *OK*, 7 May 1929, p. 3.

like aspect, itself 'symbolising the nationalist myth of Katowice as Poland's frontier fortress city'.[129]

After partition, Kattowitz had not just been incorporated into the Polish state but also the Polish nation. Its German Silesian particularity was being eroded by attempts to reinterpret it as the bulwark of Polish nationalism. This construction of a 'new' Polish city extended to other official buildings too, such as the Voivodeship Education Offices and the Silesian headquarters of Polish Radio. These were both stark modernist blocks in the new southern centre of the city, their architecture contrasting greatly with the old *Gründerzeit* cityscape of downtown Kattowitz. These buildings were also significant in that they were physical representations of the Polish state in Kattowitz but the modern architecture can also be read as intending to represent 'progress' in Upper Silesia. Unlike in Danzig, where the veneration for its architecture was linked to nationalised evocations of the past, in Kattowitz architecture provided an opportunity for Polish nationalists to rebuild the city in their own image. This building programme in many ways was a physical manifestation of the changes the city was undergoing in its demographics and in its *purpose*.

As part of the settlement to partition Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland in Geneva, both states were obliged to agree to an additional set of minority protection protocols more comprehensive than those laid out in the Minorities Treaty. Together, these new protocols were known as the Upper Silesian Geneva Convention and were intended to ameliorate the consequences of partition for each side's 'new' minority. They guaranteed the official language rights of both minorities in both territories in administration and schooling and protections against forced nationalisation of German and Polish-owned enterprises. Upper Silesians were obliged to adopt the citizenship of the state in which they resided, but the Convention did create a 'soft' border between the partitioned territories across which Upper Silesians could easily travel and work by means of a passport-like 'circulation card'. The *Industriebezirk* was also not entirely separated from the Reich economy after Germany was given the right to buy Silesian coal at agreed prices for a period of two years.

[129] Polak-Springer, p. 96.

The new system was to be arbitrated by a new League 'Mixed Commission', based in Kattowitz, to be comprised of representatives from Germany and Poland and chaired by former Swiss president, Felix Calonder. This new settlement in Upper Silesia was however time-limited for fifteen years. This has been little remarked upon but is revealing in what it reveals about the post-war conception of the new national minorities. The time limit perhaps suggests a presumption that fifteen years would be long enough for the situation to settle and Poland to fully grapple with its 'new' minorities. (Fifteen years was also how long the Saar basin was to be a League mandate.) Instead, the reverse is more likely: the fifteen-year time limit for the Geneva Convention seemed to reward the official discourse that minorities were only a 'temporary issue' rather than the permanent reality of post-war Central Europe. Indeed, as shall be discussed further, even the Geneva Convention was not entirely effective against deterring Polonisation in Eastern Upper Silesia.

Often invoked by German nationalists to invoke its supposedly threatening potential, 'Polonisation' tends to have different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, I would propose the process is split into 'passive' and 'active variants'. 'Passive Polonisation' essentially describes the process through which Polish state institutions were erected in Eastern Upper Silesia after 1922. This can be used for nationalist purposes which is why 'neutral Polonisation' would not be appropriate. This 'passive Polonisation' could often be confused, intentionally or otherwise, with a more 'active Polonisation' which sought to forcibly incorporate into the Polish national community: in effect make Poles rather than mere Polish citizens. What is key is that German nationalists feared 'active Polonisation' and were often of the opinion that 'passive Polonisation' would invariably lead to the more active variant. These fears while often exaggerated, were a manifestation of a German nationalism unable to reconcile itself to the new geopolitical reality in the Eastern Upper Silesia. But it can also help to explain why some ostensibly 'Polish' Upper Silesians might fear the erasure of a discrete Upper Silesia within Poland.

Eastern Upper Silesia was incorporated into a newly reconstituted Poland still in flux. In the three years after Polish independence was declared, the Second Republic had effectively

fought six wars to delineate its territory.[130] At the same time, it was attempting to unify three (four, including Eastern Upper Silesia) territories which had diverged dramatically since the partitions of Poland into a coherent national polity. The exact emphasis on this national 'coherence', however, was the source of great ideological conflict in the new state. According to its 1921 national census, the population of the new Polish state was roughly only two-thirds Polish with the significant Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian and Jewish minorities as well as the German populations.[131]

After 1918, Polish politics split into two camps over these new minorities. Dmowski, leader of the National Democracy movement which dominated Polish politics until 1926, saw the new Poland as the heir to the lands of the pre-Partition Polish crown: effectively a culturally and linguistically homogeneous Polish nation. This led him to favour a de-Germanising Polonisation of former Prussian Poland and antisemitism as well as pan-Slavism. In contrast, Piłsudski, saw the new state as the heir to the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This thinking prompted Poland's eastwards push beyond the Curzon line conceived at Paris as Poland's eastern border. His *Sanacja* movement viewed Poland as a culturally diverse political project. However, this was often more of an overly hopeful and in some ways nostalgic vision: the strident Polish nationalism intensified by near annihilation at the Battle of Warsaw would not countenance power-sharing or consider Poland as a multinational state. Indeed, Piłsudki's approach did not lead to a détente in Polish-German relations in the Silesian Voivodeship after he took power in the June coup of 1926.

One particular competence of the Voivodeship government was education, long a contentious issue between Germans and Poles in Upper Silesia. This largely reflected what nationalist activists saw as the great potential of the classroom as a site of national reproduction which could acculturate children into the nation.[132] One of the most contested acts of the *Kulturkampf* in Upper Silesia was the change in the official language of schooling from Polish to German.

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[130] Jochen Böhler has argued that these conflicts were essentially entangled and they are better understood as 'a civil war in Central Europe', see: Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe.*
[131] Blanke, p. 32.
[132] Tara Zahra, for example, argues extensively that schooling was a key battleground in the attempt to eradicate national indifference among the children of linguistically mixed areas of Bohemia at the end of the nineteenth century, see: Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls,* pp. 13-48.

James Bjork argues that prior to this Silesian children had been taught in Polish not due to nationalising intentions but because Church education authorities favoured it, since most of the children spoke Silesian as their mother-tongue and Polish was the closest 'official' language to this.[133] This stands in contrast to the way in which the Prussian education authorities, in the colonising spirit of Germanisation, reversed this and sought to forcibly incorporate the Upper Silesian children of the Prussian East into the German nation. The violence which often accompanied this Germanisation became a popularly remembered metaphor for Prussian repression of the Poles: in negotiations over Germany's eastern border at Versailles, Clemenceau is reported to have recalled 'the Polish exiles he had known and the stories they had told of Prussian schoolmasters beating Polish children for reciting the Lord's Prayer in their Slav tongue.'[134] This account exemplifies the popular afterlife of Germanisation in Prussian Poland.

Children in Upper Silesia were now to be taught according to new heavily nationalised curricula which sought to create new Polish citizens for the new Polish state. History teaching, in particular, reveals much about how education was employed to create loyal Poles out of German-speaking Upper Silesians. In the Silesian Voivodeship this meant the re-centring of history teaching away from German icons such as Bismarck and Frederick the Great towards Polish national history with a greater focus on Poland's pre-Partition medieval 'Golden Age'.[135] Indeed, Anna Novikov notes that this was official policy within the Voivodeship and the educational authorities' insistent emphasis on 'ancient' Polish history when referring to the Middle Ages.[136] This emphasis on Silesia's 'ancient' ties to the Polish nation was intended

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[133] Bjork, pp. 61-62

[134] Quoted in: Tooze, p. 283

[135] Anna Novikov, 'Creating a citizen: Politics and the education system in the post-plebiscite Silesian Voivodeship', in *Creating Nationality in Central Europe, 1880-1950: Modernity, violence and (be)longing in Upper Silesia*, ed. by James Bjork, Tomasz Kamusella, Tim Wilson and Anna Novikov (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 134-138: The historiography of schooling in the Silesian Voivodeship tends to overlook what German-speaking children were taught but Novikov bases much of this section of the chapter on the analysis of a history subject programme published by the Silesian Voivodeship Department of Public Education in December 1922. She notes that this is 'the only available and valuable source that describes the school programme for German-speaking children from the very start of the Silesian Voivodeship's existence' (p. 134), suggesting why so little has been written on what exactly German-speaking Silesian children were taught.

[136] Ibid.

to legitimise incorporation of Eastern Upper Silesia into Poland. In this national narrative, the intervening 700 years of Silesia's history appear as merely an illegitimate interregnum. Unlike in Danzig, this new emphasis on the medieval is more nostalgic than opportunistic: by overlooking Upper Silesia's distinct history, it could be treated as an integral part of an 'indivisible' Polish nation, rather than the historically diverse, nationally ambiguous territory it stubbornly remained.

However, attempts by Voivodeship authorities to restrict the entry into public German-language schools created a long-running dispute in Upper Silesia. While there were several German private schools in the Voivodeship, run by the local branch of the German Schools Association, it is estimated that only 5.6% of German-speaking children attended those,[137] meaning that most attended publicly funded schools. The Voivodeship authorities were concerned, however, that Silesian/Polish-speaking parents were also electing to send their children to these German-medium schools. This, Ingo Eser argues, can largely be traced to a general perception of German schooling as providing a higher quality education than Polish schools did in Eastern Upper Silesia.[138] These German schools were often well-established and most of their teachers were Upper Silesians in contrast to the new Polish-language schools with often new, untested Polish staff from outside Upper Silesia who, according to Eser, tended to be looked down on by autochthonous Upper Silesians.[139] This suggests that even those who voted for Poland in the 1922 plebiscite were not necessarily invested in the new Voivodeship institutions and, in turn, that the plebiscite had not created permanent and immutable national categories.

Article 131 of the Geneva Convention mandated that both the Polish and the German governments maintain public schools for minority children but did not suggest how these minority groups might be categorised. Counter to ideas in favour of self-identification, the Voivodeship education authorities took the view that the language which was spoken by the families at home would define a child's national status, mapping linguistic identification onto

[137] Ingo Eser, '*Volk, Staat, Gott!': Die deutsche Minderheit in Polen und ihr Schulwesen 1918–1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), p. 277
[138] Ibid, p. 382.
[139] Ibid, p. 383.

national identification. This would, in turn, have the effect of categorising all bilingual and Silesian-speaking children as Polish. Ahead of the 1926/1927 school year, the Voivodeship authorities instituted a new registration system to assess applications to German-language schools. The authorities, however, assessed that 7500 of the 9000 children applying did not have sufficient command of German to be permitted into the German-language schools. This move was protested by the Volksbund who involved the Mixed Commission, thus beginning a drawn-out legal process that would continue until the early 1930s. Calonder issued a judgement against the Voivodeship educational authorities emphasising the right to 'self-identification' of minorities, that is emphasising that identification as a minority was an individual, subjective process. This ruling was ignored by the Voivodeship and so the Volksbund, having exhausted the arbitration route provided by the Mixed Commission, complained directly to the League Council. The Council, in turn, commissioned Swiss school inspector Wilhelm Maurer to administer language tests to a sample of the Upper Silesian children. He found that of 422 pupils he examined, 253 did not have a strong enough command of German.[140] When he returned for the 1927/1928 school year, he disqualified 287 of the 720 pupils.[141] After this, Gustav Stresemann intervened on the part of the Volksbund in referring the case to yet another body, the PCIJ. It delivered a judgement which ordered the cancellation of language tests while affirming that self-identification as a minority could not be officially challenged or investigated while also arguing that identification to a minority group did rely upon 'objective measurable facts'.[142] The ruling did not entirely end the dispute after it was unclear if the ruling applied retrospectively, though it did die down. The whole process demonstrates how children had become the latest battleground between the Voivodeship and the German minority. Conceding on the issue was in neither side's interest. It also demonstrates the clear limitations of the Mixed Commission in settling disputes in Upper Silesia. It required both sides to act in good faith but frequently the Commission and its rulings were not treated as the last word on an issue and appeals to the League Council and the Hague limited its effectiveness. This speaks more broadly to how the new minority

[140] Edward D. Wynot Jr., 'The Case of German Schools In Polish Upper Silesia, 1922-1939', *The Polish Review*, 19.2 (1974), pp. 47-69 (p. 55).
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid, pp. 56-57.

protection legal infrastructure lacked any real way of addressing the worsening stalemate between the Voivodeship and its German minority.

3.3: Stalemate: A new normal in the Silesian Voivodeship?

In the early hours of 12 February 1926 the Voivodeship police launched a series of dawn raids against German minority activists across Eastern Upper Silesia. Prominent German nationalists including the head of the Volksbund in Lublinitz/Lubliniec had their houses searched and were arrested; the Volksbund's central offices in Kattowitz were sealed and searched.[143] The police's goal was reportedly to recover 'evidence of treason';[144] Voivodeship authorities suspected the Volksbund as being the front organisation for espionage coordinated by the local German consulate.[145] The *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, by now strongly aligned to the Volksbund, was incensed, arguing that the organisation:

> has only the mission to protect the purely cultural rights that the German minority are guaranteed by the Geneva Convention. It has in no way pursued any political goals or machinations in the past, is pursuing any now or will pursue any in the future.[146]

The Volksbund was, of course, a deeply political organisation and the intended target of the raids appears to have been Ulitz who was only protected by his immunity from prosecution as a Silesian Sejm deputy. The *Kattowitzer Zeitung* also expressed feigned surprise at 'how peculiar' it was the Polish-language newspapers had been tipped off about the searches.[147] It went on to summarise some of this Polish-language coverage for its German-speaking readers: *Goniec* reportedly called the Volksbund both an 'espionage organisation' and 'the root of all evil in Upper Silesia'.[148] The Polish newspaper's editorial, quoted at length, declared that 'the Polish people will not work with the Germans, a society of spies, traitors and conspirators.'[149] It is hard to determine if the Voivodeship authorities really did suspect the

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[143] 'Der "große Schlag" gegen das Deutschtum', *KZ*, 13 February 1926, p. 1; Otto Ulitz, *Aus der Geschichte Oberschlesiens* (Bonn: Landsmannschaft der Oberschlesier, 1962), pp. 54-55.
[144] 'Der "große Schlag" gegen das Deutschtum', p. 1.
[145] 'Polnische Stimmen zur "Spionageaffäre', *KZ*, 13 February 1926, p. 3.
[146] 'Der "große Schlag" gegen das Deutschtum', p. 1.
[147] 'Polnische Stimmen zur "Spionageaffäre', p. 3.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.

Volksbund of treason, even with their irredentist ambitions. Alternatively, the operation may have been intended to intimidate the Volksbund and demonstrate that their activities were under observation. Either way, the results were inconclusive: no evidence of 'treason' was found and the Volksbund remained the key German nationalist outlet in the Voivodeship. The episode highlights the stalemate built on mistrust that forming between the German minority and the Voivodeship authorities. This mistrust would manifest in vocal disputes between the two groups, particularly when these involved Polonisation.

By the mid-1920s the wider European context had changed significantly since the immediate post-war years. Beyond economic stabilisation, the new post-war order had begun to become more embedded. This had key implications for the Upper Silesian Germans and for the treatment of minorities more broadly because the enforcement of the minorities treaties and conventions was underpinned by the League, its committees and courts. Germany was undergoing its process of rehabilitation from near-pariah status to key guarantor of the European peace. While Reich policy on external German minorities remained unchanged, it did now have an international platform from which to advocate on their behalf. Since the creation of the Polish Corridor, Germany had been supporting the new *Auslandsdeutsche* through financial subsidises and pensions, largely through minority organisations like the Deutsche Stiftung. [150] However, even when generous, their impact was limited. The newly rehabilitated Germany now had the international standing to intervene on behalf of the rights of its 'external minorities'. The Volksbund could, for example, ask Germany to intervene on its behalf at the highest echelons of international politics, giving its protestations greater credibility than just another stack of petitions from a disgruntled minority organisation.

The Locarno treaties, concluded in December 1925, did much to bring about this rehabilitation of Germany so much so that many contemporary observers heralded the 'Spirit of Locarno', a new chapter in post-war Great Power relations. The treaties were more focussed on peace-making in Germany's west and sought to end the costly and humiliating occupation of the Rhineland by guaranteeing Germany's western borders, which in turn effectively ended the

[150] Blanke, pp. 152-162; Chu, pp. 90-92.

chance of border revision over Alsace and Lorraine.[151] However, at Locarno, long-term Reich foreign minister Gustav Stresemann pointedly refused to provide the same guarantees to Poland,[152] a move which he repeatedly argued in private 'offered the possibility of recovering German territory lost in the East'.[153] This was highly damaging to Poland as it raised the prospect of future border revision that might reincorporate Eastern Upper Silesia, alongside Danzig and the Corridor, back into the Reich. Border revision had become a legitimate talking point which in turn only incentivised many German Upper Silesians to believe that their experience as Polish citizens would only be temporary. Untroubled coexistence, let alone, integration seemed less likely now.

The more concrete result of the supposed 'Spirit of Locarno' for German Upper Silesians was the Reich's accession into the League as permanent Council members in September 1926. Carole Fink notes that right from the Reich cabinet's decision to seek League membership in 1924, the defence of German minorities had been used as a key justification.[154] Stresemann in particular associated himself with this cause, incorporating it into his more assuredly nationalist foreign policy ambitions. With a 'defender of minorities' in the form of Germany, the Volksbund could rely on greater public support. This situation culminated at the League Council meeting in December 1928 in a terse stand-off between Stresemann and Polish foreign minister August Zaleski. As the Upper Silesian schools dispute remained unresolved, the Volksbund had been attempting to 'flood' the League with petitions,[155] leading Zaleski to launch a 'violent attack' on the Volksbund and accuse Ulitz of 'high treason'.[156] Stresemann in return accused Zaleski of being motivated by 'a spirit of hatred' towards the German minority

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[151] For an examination of the Locarno conference from Stresemann's perspective and its reaction, see: Jonathan Wright, *Gustav Stresemann: Weimar's Greatest Statesman* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), pp. 330-348. For an examination of the conference from a Polish perspective, see: Anna M. Cienciala and Titus Komarnicki, *From Versailles to Locarno: Keys to Polish Foreign Policy, 1919-1925* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1984), pp. 255-276.

[152] Wright, pp. 304-305.

[153] Cienciala and Komarnicki, p. 273.

[154] Carole Fink, 'Defender of Minorities: Germany in the League of Nations, 1926-1933', *Central European History* 5.4 (1972), pp. 330-357 (p. 336).

[155] Wright, p. 468.

[156] Ibid; Ulitz, p. 55: Ulitz himself comments little on these events, often writing himself out of the narrative, perhaps to lend the text a more 'authoritative' tone. He nonetheless linked them to his eventual arrest for treason in 1929.

and pointedly compared Ulitz with Józef Piłsudski, by now Poland's strongman dictator, by arguing that 'high treason and love of the old country are very closely akin and there are well-known men held in high esteem who have been guided by that love'.[157] Even if Upper Silesia remained in the German nationalist imaginary, support was often only openly articulated when it also corresponded to German foreign policy aims and Stresemann's outburst seems designed to appeal as much to a domestic audience as Upper Silesian Germans.[158] Border revision would have to wait but with Stresemann at the Reich Foreign Ministry it appeared to have risen high up the agenda.

Another significant change to the greater international political context was the 1926 May coup which brought Piłsudski and his *Sanajca* regime to power in Warsaw. The Polish Second Republic had experienced severe political and economic instability since independence in 1918 which Piłsudski's seizure of power sought to bring an end to: *Sanacja* means 'healing' and the new regime adopted this to express its zeal for a 'healing' of the Polish body politic, corrupted by a supposedly incompetent political class.[159] In Upper Silesia, this entailed the appointment by Warsaw of a new Voivode, Michał Grażyński, a Galician with few ties to Voivodeship but who had a fervent powerbase among uprising veterans owing to his experience commanding a battalion in the Third Uprising.[160] Right from his appointment Grażyński was treated as the 'bringer of Polishness' to Upper Silesia, even publicly stating in his first speech as Voivode that his aim was 'to bring Upper Silesia closer to the rest of Poland'.[161] Grażyński's appointment marked a turning point for politics in the Voivodeship: Polonisation had begun after partition but became markedly more radicalised after 1926. Germans, in particular, were the rhetorical enemy for his regional strongman ambitions,[162] (these would eventually earn him the nickname of the 'little Piłsudski').[163] His appointment and long tenure also marked a shift Polish nationalism manifested in Upper Silesia away from as a less polarised, pro-regionalist Polish nationalism, towards a more hard-line integralist

[157] Quoted in: Wright, p. 469.
[158] Wright, p. 469; Blanke, pp. 132-133.
[159] Jerzy Lukowski, and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 241.
[160] Majcherkiewicz, pp. 61, 69.
[161] 'Der neue Wojewode', *KZ*, 7 September 1926, p. 4.
[162] Peter Polak-Springer, pp. 41-42.
[163] Quoted in: Ibid.

Polish nationalism which sought to erase Upper Silesia's distinct borderland experience and which was often more openly antagonistic towards the German minority.[164]

This shift in Polish nationalism represents a larger shift in Upper Silesian society at this time: After partition, many working-class Poles, particularly from the relatively underdeveloped former Austrian Galicia, migrated to Upper Silesia to work in heavy industry during the economic crisis of the first years after independence and after many working-class Germans had emigrated.[165] With the establishment of the new Voivodeship state institutions, Upper Silesian administration was increasingly dominated by incomer Poles rather than Polish Silesians: only the first Silesian Voivode Józef Rymer, who served only six months until his death in December 1922, was a native Upper Silesian. Górnik's replacement as Kattowitz mayor, Adam Kocur, the former chief of the Voivodeship police, was a native Upper Silesian but shared Grażyński's desires for a 'radical Polonisation'.[166] These appointments indicate emerging tensions between the regionalist ambitions of autochthonous Polish Upper Silesians and the nationalising ambitions of non-Upper Silesian Poles. All too often the latter did not recognise that Upper Silesians might want to identify as both Silesian *and* Polish. These tensions dated back to the Third Silesian Uprising and the split in the Polish ranks between Upper Silesians and Poles who fought with different motivations despite the same goal of a Polish Upper Silesia. After Grażyński was appointed, he was derisively described by the local Polish newspaper *Polonia* as the 'Voivode for the uprising veterans' association'[167], an increasingly belligerent grouping which was perturbing autochthonous Upper Silesian civil society.

Such obvious strong-handed Polonisation often alienated Polish-speaking Upper Silesians, who were as much targets for incorporation into the Polish nation as German-speakers were. In November 1926, two months after Grażyński's appointment as Voivode, local elections were held. In both Kattowitz and Königshütte, German parties won a clear majority on the

[164] Majcherkiewicz, p. 61: Grażyński would serve as Voivode until the German invasion in September 1939. In contrast, he had four predecessors in the preceding four years.
[165] Blanke, p. 52.
[166] Ibid.
[167] 'Der neue Wojewode', *KZ*, 7 September 1926, p. 4.

city councils. Even in the smaller more rural *Landkreise*, Germans not only outperformed expectations but received more votes than there were German-speakers.[168] These results led the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* to declare that the 'overwhelming' victory had finally ended the 'myth that there were no longer any Germans in the Voivodeship'.[169] These election results cannot necessarily be read as a plebiscite on Grażyński's Polonising ambitions, nor do they reflect clear immutable German majorities in the two cities or the start of a great German fightback. They do demonstrate, however, that even four years after the plebiscite national loyalties were not entirely fixed in Upper Silesia. German parties provided the opportunity of a protest vote to many non-German identifying Upper Silesians, even if this had the side-effect of buoying the spirits of German nationalists in the Voivodeship.

Upper Silesian society had now split into four distinct groups. The first was the Volksbund and allies who were irredentist German nationalist, German-speaking and had voted for Germany in the plebiscite. The second were the nationally indifferent Silesians, primarily autochthonous Silesians who were either bilingual or Silesian-speaking. They voted for both Germany and Poland in the plebiscite and were more inclined to send their children to a German-speaking school. On the more proudly Polish side were the Christian Democrats and Korfanty supporters. They were autochthonous Silesians, pro-Polish but also strongly regionalist (even willing to defend German minority rights) and who supported the Uprisings, voted for Poland in the plebiscite and sent their children to a Polish-speaking school. Finally, these three were joined by the newest of these, the Grażyński supporters. They were largely newcomers and integralist Polish nationalists, many were members of Uprising Veterans' Associations and will vote for parties associated with Grażyński and Piłsudski. It is difficult to split these up by approximate numbers or proportions, but it does suggest that Upper Silesian society, now years after partition was becoming more divided and fissile than it had been before.

On 13 February 1929, three years after his Volksbund compatriots were targeted, Ulitz was arrested by the Voivodeship police. His immunity as a Sejm deputy had expired the day

[168] 'Unser Wahlsieg!', *KZ*, 16 November 1926, p. 1.
[169] Ibid.

before when Grażyński dissolved the Sejm and he was charged with treason for allegedly helping German Upper Silesians to evade conscription by the Polish Army.[170] There was immediate outrage from the Volksbund which petitioned the League to order the release of Ulitz but also to send a commissioner to examine the Polish prosecutor's case against him and 'take the necessary steps to protect him against the completely unfounded prosecution'.[171] Both his arrest and trial in Kattowitz were followed closely by international press, particularly after international focus had turned to national minorities following Stresemann's interventions at the League in 1928. While the trial examined these specific charges against Ulitz, it raised broader questions of the role of national minorities and their relationship to the majority state and nation, specifically the question of loyalty and national minorities. One newspaper, *Ostland*, published in Berlin for Eastern European Germans, even asked if the Ulitz trial would lead to more trials against German minorities in the East.[172]

Before the court, Ulitz attempted to articulate a position whereby it was entirely possible to think of themselves 'officially as Polish citizens and German as members of the German nation.[173] This appears to be little more than a rephrasing of how Ulitz conceived of his own national identity after partition in 1922 when he described himself as a 'Polish citizen of German nationality'.[174] In his closing statements to the court, he added

> it is possible to be a convincingly good German and a good citizen. That is an obligation towards the Polish state. Loyalty is respect for the law […] The way from loyalty to patriotism lies not upwards from national minorities [to the state] but must come from the state downwards to national minorities'.[175]

Here Ulitz is making a nuanced distinction between state and nation at a moment when the two were often treated as congruent but when there existed a real, unresolved tension between them. He thus challenges the overriding official belief that minorities would merely be a

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[170] Gerhard Webersinn, *Otto Ulitz. Ein Leben für Oberschlesien* (Augsburg: Oberschlesischer Heimatverlag, 1974), p. 51.
[171] 'Protest beim Völkerbund eingelegt', *OK,* 15 February 1929, p. 1.
[172] 'Weitere Deutschtums-Prozesse?' *Ostland*, 2 August 1929, p. 3.
[173] Quoted in: Webersinn, p. 60.
[174] Webersinn, p. 33.
[175] Ibid, pp. 33-34.

'temporary' issue for the new post-war states to deal with. The national minorities to assimilate into the majority nation suggests why minorities had become such a salient issue by the end of the 1920s. In an increasingly authoritarian nationalising Poland, it is not surprising that state authorities remained unconvinced that it was possible for national minorities to be loyal to both.

On 29 July 1929 Ulitz was sentenced to five months in prison, suspended for two years. This conviction was, however, overturned on appeal in Warsaw in February 1930. The trial was significant, both in its symbolism and its substance. On one level it seemed that the whole German minority in Upper Silesia had been put on trial, such a key figure Ulitz had become. There was also suspicion by the German minority about the charges brought before him; they sensed that the Polish authorities had acted opportunistically to make an example of Ulitz. It is significant that the trial took place outside the minority protection infrastructure of the Geneva Convention: suspicions by Poland of the disloyalty of national minorities were one thing the new institutional frameworks could not resolve, highlighting again their limited scope. These new arrangements could not avoid the stalemate that emerged between Warsaw and the Upper Silesian German minority, of which the Ulitz trial was the clear nadir. As this chapter has shown German national identity remained important for many Kattowitzers, particularly so in the face of Polonisation and the perceived persecution of the minority in the late 1920s. Their options, though, particularly in effecting border revision, remained slim and rooted in defending themselves and their identity against the Voivodeship authorities.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

By the end of 1930, the situation for the Germans of Danzig and Kattowitz was at its most difficult moment since the immediate post-war period. The economic crisis had revivified German and Polish nationalisms, re-entrenching the stalemate between the German minority and Poland in Upper Silesia while a stalemate now looming in the Free City. There, a Senate formed of German Nationals and Nazis was elected by the new fragmented Volkstag while in Kattowitz *Sanacja* secured its grip on power in the Silesian Voivodeship. The ruling party's underperformance in the elections of May 1930 led Voivode Grażyński to brazenly rerun the elections in November; he then received his desired result of a rubber-stamping *Sanacja* majority. This marginalised the German parties which had won a slim plurality of seats in the first elections.

This thesis has explored the process that led to this polarisation. It was not inevitable but contingent upon internal and external factors over the eleven years since the Treaty of Versailles was signed. In many ways, its roots can be found not in Danzig or Kattowitz, Berlin or Warsaw but Paris. Here, the victorious Allied powers had sought to construct a new post-war order out of the wreckage of four years of war and imperial collapse. Many of the issues lay in how this 'wreckage' was handled. The desire to form an Allied-led international order and place 'national self-determination' at the heart of it was rhetorically key but in practice they were often irreconcilable objectives. In the cases of Danzig and Kattowitz, it can be argued that Allied desires for Germany to bear responsibility for the war were the more decisive motivation in their detachment from the Reich. This is somewhat too superficial, however, and overlooks the roles of economics and the cities' 'purpose' in their detachment: to provide Poland with a port and heavy industry, respectively. That said economic rationale can also elide the role of ordinary people in broader process, that of the delineation of discrete nation-states from the territory of collapsing imperial projects, of which the new Polish state was at the confluence, the 'shatterzone',[176] of all three. The creation of new national states with

[176] To use a term theorised in: Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (eds.), *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2013).

national majorities entailed the simultaneous creation of national minorities. From the start the status of minorities within this new order was unclear. The minorities treaties attempted to smooth over this process but relied upon the false assumption that these minorities would soon assimilate into the majority nation. In the interwar period that did not occur and the minorities question would remain unresolved in Central Europe until its long history of cultural heterogeneity was irreversibly ended by the Holocaust and the wave of post-war expulsions and population transfers.

Of the two case studies, the minorities question manifested most clearly in Kattowitz as the city, at least initially, had a German majority while the surrounding Silesian Voivodeship was majority Polish. As in the rest of former Prussian Poland, Eastern Upper Silesia experienced demographic changes as many Germans emigrated 'back' to the Reich and Poles from the other former partition areas immigrated to the region. While the remaining German minority might have lacked institutional power and political autonomy, relative victories such as the triumph of the German parties in the 1926 municipal elections were encouraging in how they demonstrated that the minority could make its collective voices heard (even if doing so meant being reliant upon nationally indifferent Silesians). Irredentism, fanned by Stresemann's intimations towards border revision, provided hope to the German minority through their belief that Upper Silesia, as an egregious example of the lack of national self-determination, would 'soon' be reincorporated into the Reich. That said, it would be difficult to call Kattowitz a German city by 1930. While retaining a sizeable German minority, the city had been transformed into 'Katowice', now as much the borderland capital of a victorious Polishness in Upper Silesia as it was the heart of the *Industriebezirk*. Change was to some degree inevitable as before 1914 it was a modest if bustling industrial city, barely fifty years old. Now it was the administrative heart of the new Silesian Voivodeship, but indeed more than that it was not just a *Silesian* capital but a distinctly *Polish* capital.

The two were often elided in the interwar period but after the Silesian Uprisings it was the introduction of radical integral Polish nationalism in the form of Grażyński that highlighted the cleavage in Polish Silesian society. It would be difficult to categorise the German minority in the Voivodeship as nationally indifferent by 1930. The belief in imminent border revision

and the fact that these desires were not simply one-sided but had strong support within the Reich itself incentivised continued attachment to the wider *Deutschtum*. Indeed, the minority's targeting by the Voivodeship often radicalised it and its most vocal organ, the Volksbund, even further. There is evidence however to suggest that nationally indifferent segments of Silesian society still existed after all the apparent national polarisation of the period 1919-1922, occurring outside German nationalist circles.

The relationship between the German minority and the Voivodeship remained poor, however. The stalemate that emerged was even more entrenched by 1930 after the trial of Ulitz which appeared to confirm suspicions that the Volksbund, and therefore the minority, was being targeted by the Voivodeship. While Grażyński made his Polonising ambitions clear, the German minority was also becoming more influenced by an increasingly *völkisch* and irredentist German nationalism. The German minority had no real strategy though apart from waiting for border revision and attempting to contest Polonisation, both perceived and real, through the legal routes offered to them by the Geneva Convention. The Convention's arbitration mechanisms were poorly equipped to deal in the disputes between the emboldened nationalisms.

At 303 pages long, the Upper Silesian Geneva Convention was the most comprehensive attempt to protect the rights of minorities in the post-war period. However, in retrospective discussions on how effective the minority protection system was, its unprecedented nature is often emphasised.[177] The post-war order and its reliance upon supranational institutions such as the League and the PCIJ provided the foundations for modern international law but did not achieve the aims for which they were designed. More broadly, this internationalised system had wide-reaching ramifications in how it re-conceptualised state sovereignty for the post-war age but the system was *imposed* on the states of Central Europe, states which were reluctant to accommodate the perceived loss of sovereignty. In Poland's case, the Geneva Convention stood between it and its nationalising objectives in Upper Silesia. While Poland did not fully repudiate these institutions, they struggled with a legitimacy problem. As the stalemate developed between the Voivodeship and the German minority, it was in neither

[177] For example, in: Tooze, p. 282;

side's interest to concede and so, as in the case of the schools dispute, rulings could either be ignored or a higher, more 'legitimate' authority, like the League Council or the PCIJ, could be invoked in its place.

While this is a critique of the institutional frameworks assembled to support the new post-war national states and their place within the international order themselves, it is as much a reflection of the difficult questions unleashed by the imperial collapse of 1918. Key to this thesis was the question of how to (re-)establish a 'viable' Polish state after the development and spread of nationalism had made any loss of territory an intolerable attack on the indivisible body politic of the German nation. In the period 1918-1922 different diplomatic objectives clashed with each other and so compromises were fashioned to deal with these often unreconcilable objectives. One route applied was that of internationalisation reflecting the attempts to build peace on a continental scale. The most internationalised attempt to reconcile these different Allied objectives was the *sui generis* Free City of Danzig. Here, the Allied powers attempted to supranationally defuse the contradictions inherent in denying national self-determination to Danzig so that the city could once again perform its 'historic function' as the port of the Polish lands. This was as anachronistic as the German nationalist interpretation of the city's Hanseatic past. What was once distinct had, in the minds of German Danzigers, become 'just another' German city. In the past, Danzig may have pledged allegiance to the Polish king, but this was completely different to now pledging allegiance to the Polish nation.

One significant difference between the experiences of Danzig and Kattowitz was that the Germans of Danzig at least had significant political autonomy through the Free City's governmental institutions, even if the overall sovereignty of the Free City was vague and contested. While relations between the Free City and Poland began poorly, this political autonomy allowed the opportunity for renewal and to change course. This came in 1927 with the election of the Social Democrats with their signature *Verständigungspolitik*, a rapprochement with Poland which might reset relations. This was a significant moment for the Free City and allowed it to avoid the situation experienced in Upper Silesia where total stalemate had emerged between the German minority and Polish authorities. Clark has

argued that *Verständigungspolitik*, alongside the stabilised economic conditions which enabled it, laid the 'foundations for reconciliation' between Poland and the Free City and effectively came close to ending the national question in Danzig. Her thesis, however, misses the pragmatic nationalism of the policy and in ending most of her analysis with the 1927 elections, ignores the difficulties in its implementation.[178] While it may have brought a greater willingness to compromise to the table, *Verständigungspolitik* did not alter the fundamentals in the relationship.

Clark has more recently revised her analysis and given it an imaginative dimension calling the Free City a 'borderland of the mind':[179] Danzigers always imagined themselves as more independent, more sovereign than the Free City ever was, effectively *imagining* a sovereign Free City. Self-conception and the role of imagination in the construction of national identities has been key to this thesis. I would take these ideas further and argue that Danzigers saw themselves not as a borderland but *as* German as Berlin or Hamburg. As a port city, it may have been a site of exchange but in the interwar period this did not fundamentally change Danzigers' self-conception. Key to this is the nationalist blurring of the national periphery and the core, which was also evident in Kattowitz. German nationalists in Danzig sought to recentre the city westwards as *thoroughly* German with a German history so as to emphasise the supposed indignity of Danzigers' detachment from the Reich. Likewise, Polish nationalists in Kattowitz like Grażyński sought to relocate the city's place within the Polish imaginary away from the Silesian periphery and deeper into the Polish nation. Neither of these endeavours were immediately achievable, however. German nationalists in Danzig were constrained by the Free City, which had diverged from the Reich economically if not culturally and over which Poland exercised some sovereignty: it may have left the German state, but it remained within the German nation. Kattowitz's Polonisation was incomplete because a substantial German minority remained and more nationally indifferent Silesians refused to give their full backing to the Polish state. This blurring can be traced back to nationalism's conception of the nation, its emphasis on finite, impermeable borders and, by extension, the ubiquitous celebration of these boundaries, whether natural or artificial, in what Benedict

[178] Clark, 'Poland and the Free City of Danzig'.
[179] Clark, 'Borderland of the Mind'.

Anderson termed the 'map-as-logo'.[180] According to nationalist logic, you are within the nation or you are outside it.

As much recent scholarship has shown this is seldom actually the case. Regional studies focussing on contested spaces and the intersection of different nations have sought to show this. They have thereby contributed greatly to our understanding of nationalism and how it is experienced at the peripheries of nations, if indeed it is experienced at all. This approach is not without its detractors however and has begun to provoke a backlash as scholars suggest that it 'has made exceptional cases seem as if they might have become the rule'.[181] This critique somewhat misses the point that it is often these exceptional cases that demonstrate that nationalism is not a homogenous force and is experienced neither uniformly nor universally. The framework of national indifference challenges our understanding of nationalism but also challenges conventional scholarship's methodological nationalism which privileges the nation-state as *the* primary constitutive unit of investigation.

Through its case studies of Danzig and Kattowitz, two nationally contested spaces throughout the interwar period, this thesis has explored the intersection of rival German and Polish nationalisms at an unprecedented moment of flux and how continent-wide processes were negotiated on a local level. While the experience of shifting borders and national detachment were experienced in both cities, responses to it went beyond inevitable German irredentism. By 1930 neither German-speaking community could be characterised as 'nationally indifferent' but their process of negotiation remained complex and contingent. What was shared between the two was the perceived illegitimacy of the Treaty of Versailles and over the next decade that settlement would be destroyed but not in the way Danzigers and Kattowitzers in 1930 would have foreseen.

[180] Anderson, p. 175.
[181] Connelly, p. 20.

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